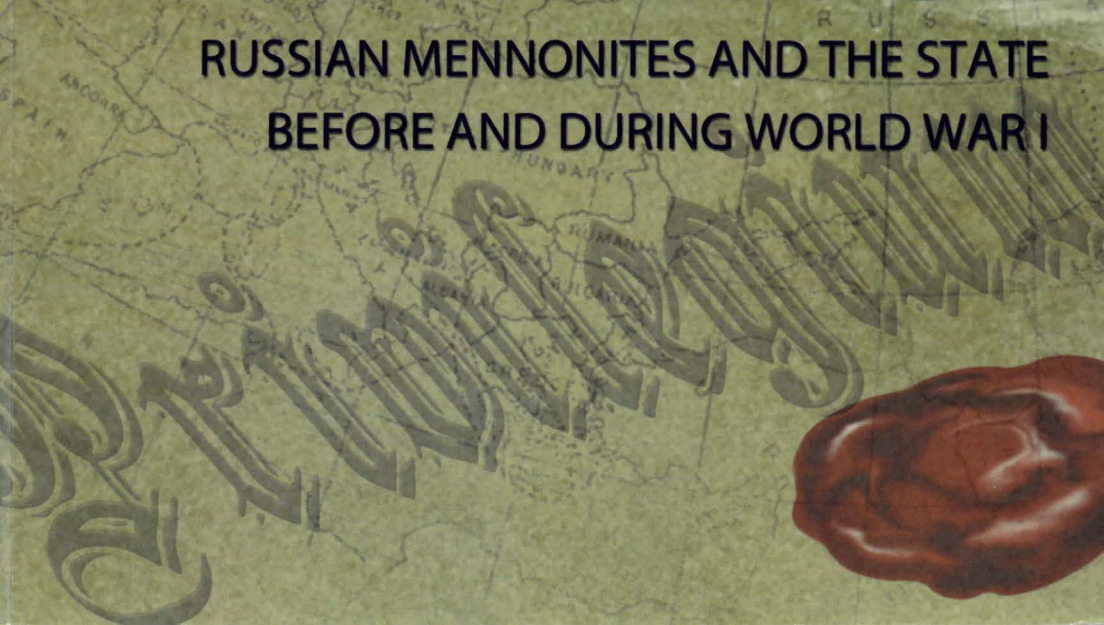


ABRAHAM FRIESEN



# IN DEFENSE OF PRIVILEGE

RUSSIAN MENNONITES AND THE STATE  
BEFORE AND DURING WORLD WAR I







# IN DEFENSE OF PRIVILEGE

RUSSIAN MENNONITES AND THE STATE  
BEFORE AND DURING WORLD WAR I

*Perspectives on Mennonite Life and Thought* is a series jointly published between Kindred Productions, the Historical Commission of the US and Canadian Conferences of Mennonite Brethren Churches and the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies of Winnipeg, Manitoba; Fresno, California; and Hillsboro, Kansas. \*

1. Paul Toews, ed., *Pilgrims and Strangers: Essays in Mennonite Brethren History* (1977)
2. Abraham Friesen, ed., *P.M. Friesen and His History: Understanding Mennonite Brethren Beginnings* (1979)
3. David Ewert, ed., *Called to Teach* (1979)
4. Heinrich Wölk and Gerhard Wölk, *Die Mennoniten Brudergemeinde in Russland, 1925 – 1989: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte* (1981)
5. John B. Toews, *Perilous Journey: The Mennonite Brethren in Russia 1860 – 1910* (1988)
6. Aron A. Toews, *Mennonite Martyrs: People Who Suffered for Their Faith 1920 – 1940*, translated by John B. Toews, (1990)
7. Paul Toews, ed., *Mennonite and Baptists: A Continuing Conversation* (1993)
8. J.B. Toews, *A Pilgrimage of Faith: The Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia and North America 1860 – 1990* (1993)
9. Paul Toews, ed., *Bridging Troubled Waters: Mennonite Brethren at Mid-Century* (1995)
10. Peter Penner, *Russians, North Americans and Telugus: The Mennonite Brethren Mission in India 1885 – 1975* (1997)
11. Jacob Loewen, Wesley Prieb, *Only the Sword of the Spirit* (1997) The publication of this volume was assisted by a grant from the Loewen/Quiring trust.
12. Marvin E Kroeker, *Comanches and Mennonites on the Oklahoma Plains: A.J. and Magdalena Becker and the Post Oak Mission* (1997)
13. Abe J Dueck, *Moving Beyond Secession: Defining Russian Mennonite Brethren Mission and Identity, 1872 – 1922* (1997)
14. John B Toews, ed.,/translator, *Journeys: Mennonite Stories of Faith and Survival in Stalin's Russia* (1998)
15. John B. Toews. Ed./translator, *Story of the Early Mennonite Brethren 1860 – 69: A Documentary Supplement* (2001)
16. Abraham Friesen, *In Defense of Privilege: Russian Mennonites and the State Before and During World War I* (2005)

\* Volumes 1-4 were published by the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies (Fresno)

# IN DEFENSE OF PRIVILEGE

RUSSIAN MENNONITES AND THE STATE  
BEFORE AND DURING WORLD WAR I

ABRAHAM FRIESEN

WINNIPEG, MB CANADA



HILLSBORO, KS USA



In Defense of Privilege  
Russian Mennonites and the State Before and During World War I

Copyright © 2006 by The Historical Commission of the US and Canadian Mennonite Brethren Churches.

All rights reserved. With the exception of brief excerpts for reviews, no part of this book may be reproduced in any form without prior written permission of the publisher.

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Friesen, Abraham

In defense of privilege : Russian Mennonites and the state before and during World War I / Abraham Friesen.

(Perspectives on Mennonite life and thought ; 15)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-894791-07-X

1. Church and state--Mennonites--History. 2. Church and state--Russia--History. I. Title. II. Series.

BX8119.R8F66 2005

322'.1'0947

C2005-906510-9

Published simultaneously by  
Kindred Productions, Winnipeg MB R3M 3Z6 and  
Kindred Productions, Hillsboro KS 67063

Cover and book design by Fred Koop, Saskatoon SK

Printed in Canada by the Christian Press, Winnipeg, MB

International Standard Book Number: 1-894791-07-X

*This book  
is dedicated to the  
memory of my nephew,  
Douglas Andrew Friesen  
(1964 – 1998),  
to his wife, Monica  
and their three children,  
Katherine, Richard and Sarah*





# Contents

Preface.....vii  
Acknowledgments .....xii  
Archival Collections & Abbreviations.....xvi

**PART I:**  
**Prologue to Conflict: History, Historians,**  
**and the Recovery of a Heritage**

**Introduction:** A Russian Mennonite Parable .....3  
**Chapter 2:** In Search of Authors .....17  
**Chapter 3:** No Longer a Child.....29  
**Chapter 4:** Through the Eyes of a Stranger.....51

**PART II:**  
**Religious Minorities and the Orthodox State:**  
**Mennonites and the Politics of Religion after the**  
**April/October 1905 Manifestos**

**Chapter 5:** “Nowhere do Heterodox Religions Enjoy so .....89  
Perfect a Liberty as in Russia”  
**Chapter 6:** “Raduga,” the Sign of God’s New Covenant .....123  
with Russia  
**Chapter 7:** Church and State against the Covenant: .....141  
The Investigation of “Raduga”  
**Chapter 8:** “The Godless Promise not to make.....169  
Propaganda for the Mennonite Faith”

### PART III:

#### Ethnic Minorities and the War: Mennonite Isolation, Opposition to Russification, and the Coming of Land Liquidation

Chapter 9:	“Do you not know that every German in Russia is a Spy?”	191
Chapter 10:	“All this, with one Stroke of the Pen, will belong to Us”	211
Chapter 11:	“We Hate and Loathe this People”	251
Chapter 12:	“A Nation State will simply not tolerate Ethnic Minorities”	259

### PART IV:

#### The War, its Aftermath, and the Russian Mennonite Search for Identity

Chapter 13:	War and Ethnic Identity: “A Process of Clarification”	271
Chapter 14:	The <i>Völklein</i> and the <i>Volk</i> : Repatriation, Emigration, and a Shifting National Identity	303
Chapter 15:	Those Who Ignore History	327
Epilogue:	Who <u>are</u> the (Russian) Mennonites?	345
Endnotes		373
Bibliography		493
Index		515

# Preface

Responding to a request from the Bluffton historian, C. Henry Smith, for information on the Russian Mennonite Commission for Church-Related Affairs (the *Kommission für kirchliche Angelegenheiten*) in 1938, Jacob H. Janzen, then bishop of the Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church in Ontario, wrote:

... The founding of the Commission for Church-Related Affairs became necessary when the Russian Czarist government began in all earnestness to proceed with its schemes to russificate all non-Russians, to quench their religious beliefs and to force them into the Greek Orthodox Church, the State Church of Russia. It was then the commission of the *KfK* to ward off the disaster by constant negotiations with the government and by shielding our educational institutions from the attacks of the same. And the *KfK* can justly boast of great achievements during that period of time ...<sup>1</sup>

Janzen's observation is somewhat anachronistic for the *KfK* was first established in 1910 and the Tsarist government had already begun to attempt to russify its non-Russian minorities in the 1860s. His statement holds true nevertheless and could be applied with equal justification to earlier Mennonite institutions, like the Molotschna Mennonite School Board, which already resisted the government's attempt to russify the Mennonites through their schools in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> But it was during the period following the October, 1905 Manifesto to the end of World War I, approximately 1909 to 1917, that the Russian government, as the present study argues, was provided a second opportunity to attempt to integrate its minorities into an increasingly nationalistic Russian state emerging from the Tsarist multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious empire. It was during these years that the *KfK* worked to thwart the government's intentions.

At the very time the Russian government was seeking to obliterate the identities of its ethnic minorities and transform them into Russians, however, Russia was herself undergoing a national identity transformation. Long caught in a tug-of-war between East and West, the Russian state had, at least since Peter the Great, turned decisively toward the West. This turn to the West was symbolized by the new city on the Neva River named after Peter himself; the eastward direction of Russia was symbolized by the city of Moscow, dominated by the Orthodox Church which had always hated the West.<sup>3</sup> As Orlando Figes has observed:

St. Petersburg was more than a city. It was a vast, almost utopian, project of cultural engineering to reconstruct the Russian as a European man ... Every



aspect of its Petrine culture was intended as a negation of 'medieval' (seventeenth century) Muscovy. As Peter conceived it, to become a citizen of Petersburg was to leave behind the 'dark' and 'backward' customs of the Russian past in Moscow and to enter, as a European Russian, the modern world of progress and enlightenment.

Muscovy was a religious civilization. It was rooted in the spiritual traditions of the Eastern Church which went back to Byzantium. In some ways it resembled the medieval culture of central Europe, to which it was related by religion, language, custom and much else besides. But historically and culturally it remained isolated from Europe. Its western territories were no more than a toe-hold on the European continent: the Baltic lands were not captured by the Russian empire until the 1720s, the western Ukraine and the lion's share of Poland not until the end of the eighteenth century. Unlike central Europe Muscovy had little exposure to the influence of the Renaissance and the Reformation. It took no part in the maritime discoveries or the scientific revolutions of the early modern era. It had no great cities in the European sense, no princely or Episcopal courts to patronize the arts, no real burgher or middle class, and no universities or public schools apart from the monastery academies.<sup>4</sup>

It was during this "Western interlude"—from about 1700 to 1860—that the Russian empire expanded, including within its borders conquered minorities of foreign origin and diverse religions. To the conquered peoples were added groups of minorities invited into the country from the West, among them the Prussian Mennonites who arrived in 1789. Both the latter and the former were granted a broad array of privileges during this period, no doubt at least in part due to the Russian government's imperial character and Western orientation. But the French Revolution, and especially Napoleon's 1812 invasion of Russia, began to place a less attractive face upon the West. And when these events were followed by the internal revolt of the "Decembrists" in 1825, ostensibly under Western influence, the revolutionary principles emanating from the French Revolution appeared to have penetrated Mother Russia herself. The Polish uprisings of 1830 and 1863 seemed only to confirm that the earlier assumed beneficial Western influences were beginning to prove dangerous to the country. It is perhaps no accident, therefore, that the beginning of St. Petersburg's policy of russification in the 1860s should coincide with the last uprising of the Poles.

If Western influences were dangerous, what about Russia's "Western" minorities, whether conquered or imported, many of whom lived in territories bordering potential European enemies? Together with the rise of a Russian sense of nationalism around 1860 and its concomitant attempt by the government to transform the Russian empire into a unified nation state, Russia entered a period of identity crisis during which it eventually sought to return to its Eastern, Muscovite roots. This placed her "Western" minorities in a difficult position and posed the question, what to do with them? The answer was to attempt to assim-

ilate them, to russify them, thereby making them candidates for inclusion in a thoroughly Russian state. Hence the russification of which Jacob H. Janzen spoke in his manuscript on the *KfK* to C. Henry Smith.

As she moved away from Peter the Great's Western orientation, Russia set about to rob her minorities of their Western identity by forcing a Russian Muscovite identity upon them, even to the extent, at least according to Jacob H. Janzen, of attempting to transform them into Russian Orthodox believers. For the Russian Mennonite minorities such a transformation brought with it at least two major consequences: first, the loss of their ethnic and religious identities; and, secondly, the inevitable end of the privileges granted them by Paul I in the great *Privilegium* of 1800. The Mennonites had insisted upon the latter as a condition of their entry into the country; but they had not thought much about their ethnic identity until they were confronted with the loss of what they increasingly called their *Eigenart*, their unique and idiosyncratic way of life after the 1860s. Nevertheless, when these were threatened they defended both with a singleness of purpose that brought success on virtually all fronts, as Jacob H. Janzen contended for the *KfK*, and Peter J. Braun asserted for the Moltoschna Mennonite School Board.<sup>5</sup> But what both Janzen and Braun failed to tell their readers was that in successfully opposing St. Petersburg's policies, Mennonites had increasingly alienated a government that was their only source of protection in an increasingly hostile nation.

Whereas Mennonites had not given much thought to their racial or ethnic identity before the struggle began, the government's attempt to russify them finally drew their attention to who they were and where they had come from. But without a history there can be no real identity. The Mennonites who had been largely ignorant of their own history to this point now sought increasingly to discover who they were and what it was they were so doggedly defending. Their search for identity undoubtedly helped to fuel an educational explosion in their midst just before the turn of the century. In the midst of this explosion the Boer War reminded them of their Dutch origin. By the time the government therefore renewed its attempt to russify them after the 1905 October Manifesto, the *KfK* – consisting of three members, two of whom, as H. J. Braun put it for himself, were seeking to learn everything they could about Mennonite origins – was much better prepared for the renewed struggle than it had been earlier; prepared to such a degree, in fact, that Janzen could write C. Henry Smith that the "*KfK* can justly boast of great achievements during that period of time."<sup>6</sup>

World War I, in which Russia fought against Germans and Austrians, changed the dynamics of the struggle, however. What it had not dared or been able to achieve prior to the war the Russian government now

simply enforced by fiat. Indeed, national minorities, especially all “Germans,” were simply to be eliminated and their lands and businesses confiscated by means of the notorious land liquidation laws of February and January, 1915. Russian Mennonites fought these laws by arguing that the government had misconstrued their identity: that they were not of German but rather of Dutch ancestry. Successful to a degree, this argument was employed on a truly massive scale during the war and was, as we shall see, precipitously abandoned when German troops entered the Ukraine in early 1918, saving them from the depredations of the Makhno anarchist hordes in early 1918 after the collapse of the Tsarist regime. Under the protection of the German armies Mennonites now declared themselves to be Germans. But no matter which racial identity they arrogated to themselves or how their assertions regarding it affected the surrounding population, they continued throughout to defend the privileges granted them upon their entry to the country. Hence the title of the study: *In Defense of Privilege*.

In the aftermath of the war and the October, 1917 Revolution, Russian Mennonites decided to emigrate. That decision nearly inevitably led certain of their leaders to ask why their troubles with the Tsarist government had increased over the years. Some answered that their refusal to assimilate lay at the heart of those troubles, troubles that would continue to affect them in an era of national states no matter where they might migrate to. The problem had therefore to be addressed even before the exodus from Russia was underway. Others blamed the Russian “empire” for being intolerant toward its minorities. After all, all empires had of necessity to deal with minorities, and even Russia had once dealt magnanimously with them. The protagonists in the debate were A. A. Friesen, the Chairman of the Study Commission elected to find new homes for those wishing to emigrate, and Benjamin H. Unruh, the Executive Secretary of the same Commission. The former argued in favor of assimilation on the basis that modern nation states would simply no longer tolerate ethnic minorities in their midst; the latter argued that an empire, like Russia, should have been more tolerant thereby ensuring the loyalty of its minorities, Mennonites included. The irony was that many of the Mennonites’ problems in Russia had been created by the very fact that the Russian government was attempting to transform the country from a multi-ethnic, multi-religious empire into a more modern nation state during these years. Few Mennonites were aware of this however, or that the transition was exacerbated by Russia’s own identity crisis and the rejection of its “Western” orientation. But even had they understood the larger context of their Russian troubles better, Mennonites would have remained unwilling to give up their beloved privileges, even in the lands to which they hoped to emigrate.



If that was true, could Mennonites ever be assimilated, even in their new homelands? Few Russian Mennonites, caught between a country that had just reviled them and another that had not yet accepted them, wished to confront such a question.

Given the events in Russia during and after World War I, it is little wonder that the Russian Mennonites themselves underwent an identity crisis, at times claiming to be of German, at other times of Dutch descent. The debate had consequences, for *das Deutschum* came to be so intimately involved prior to and during World War II with Nazi racial theories that many Mennonites, like Benjamin H. Unruh, Walter Quiring and H. H. Schroeder, who advocated it most vociferously, fell prey to the blandishments of Nazi propaganda. It was not the case, as so many Russian Mennonites asserted even in this author's hearing later on, that the loss of the German language and culture would inevitably entail the loss of the Mennonite faith. Indeed, precisely the opposite turned out to be true: it was those who advocated *das Deutschum* most adamantly who lost their Mennonite faith.

It is this question of Anabaptist faith and Mennonite ethnicity in the Prussian/Russian Mennonite context that is addressed in the *Epilogue*, though not in any definitive manner. That will have to remain to a future study.

# Acknowledgments

I have incurred many debts in the process of writing this book. First, had it not been for Peter J. Braun's *Kto takie Mennonity* (Who are the Mennonites?) – a German translation of which was given me some ten years ago by my mother's cousin, Irmgard Braun-Hörner, of Germany – I would never have embarked upon so foolhardy an enterprise as writing a book on a Russian Mennonite topic, especially since all my previous work had been done on Reformation and related themes. So my mother's cousin in Germany bears at least some of the responsibility for what follows. But reading that manuscript, as I did just shortly after the publication of my 1992 *Menno Simons Lectures* with their emphasis on Ludwig Keller, awakened in me an interest in how Keller's interpretation of Anabaptism could have come to the Russian Mennonites and so captured their imagination that it became embedded in a document that attempted to defend the Russian Mennonites against the aspersions of their enemies at the outbreak of the First World War. I set out to locate the Russian original, have it translated in order to compare it with the German translation of 1933, and edit it. But upon my return to this country I discovered that Abe J. Dueck, then Director of the Winnipeg Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, had already begun the process of translation with the goal of publication. Since Peter J. Braun was my grandfather's younger brother, I claimed proprietary rights to the piece and persuaded Abe to allow me to publish it. This he did with good grace and little opposition, a generosity on his part I have learned to regret over and over again. For, had he put up a stiffer defense, I might not have embarked upon so hazardous an enterprise for a scholar of the Reformation.

As I worked with the above document all kinds of questions arose and, as historians are wont to say, one thing led to another. Before long I was in contact with James Urry and looking for materials in various Mennonite archives in Canada and the United States. Especially helpful were the materials collected from Russia and the Ukraine by Paul Toews, director of the Fresno Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies. When I began the study these were in the process of being catalogued and indexed by Andrey Ivanov, a native of the Ukraine and fluent in the Russian language, who was then a student at Fresno Pacific University. Checking through the Center's holdings from time to time, and being directed by Andrey and Paul Toews at other times, a number of documents relevant to my study came to light, all of which Andrey translated for me. At other times both Paul Toews and Andrey Ivanov were instrumental in procuring materials directly out of the St. Petersburg

archives for me. Over the years Paul Toews' annual foray into Ukrainian and Russian archives uncovered other relevant documents. Without their help and the microfilmed documents in the Fresno Center, this study would have been impossible. I wish here to thank both for their continued interest in the project as well as their assistance over many years of work on the manuscript.

For the Mennonite generated materials the Mennonite Brethren Archives in Winnipeg, under the direction of Abe J. Dueck, and the Heritage Centre, then under the direction of Lawrence Klippenstein, proved very useful. In the former it was the B. B Janz collection that offered up a number of important documents; and in the latter it was the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization papers that proved especially helpful. The Mennonite Library and Archives on the campus of Bethel College, under the direction of John Thiesen, with its collection of A. A. Friesen papers, was even more helpful. And John Thiesen, who also took a personal interest in the work, continued throughout to keep an eye out for relevant documents in other collections, copies of which he invariably made available to me. The MLA also housed Peter J. Braun's personal papers which proved to be very significant to the study. Even much of Benjamin Unruh's manuscript (*Die Auswanderung der nieder-deutschen mennonitischen Bauern aus der Sowet-union, 1923-1933*) housed in the Hoover Archives on the campus of Stanford University – parts of which I inspected on site – was made available to me by John Thiesen. In the Mennonite Church Archives on the campus of Goshen College other important materials relevant to the period between the Russian Revolution and the end of the Mennonite migration from Russia were located. Dennis Stoess, the archivist, was equally helpful in this search and continued to provide information and documents well after I had left the premises. Last but not least, the Heinrich J. Braun papers (another of my grandfather's brothers) were placed at my disposal by my Great Aunt, Irmgard Braun-Hörner (in the latter case the "great" really does apply!) without any conditions attached.

The Inter-Library Loan Department at the University of California, Santa Barbara campus must also be mentioned here, for they procured even the most rare and obscure of books for me as I worked my way through the manuscript. I was often amazed that they could not only find but also borrow these rare tomes. Only one book they could not get for me – Reisswitz and Wadzeck's 1821 *Beiträge zur Kenntniss der Mennoniten-Gemeinden in Europa und Amerika*. But here Harry Loewen came to my rescue, for he loaned me his copy for over a year, a loan that rescued it from the fire that destroyed his home and library in Kelowna several years ago.

At the outset of this study, James Urry was an indispensable mentor

and guide as well as a selfless scholar always willing to share relevant information and materials he had at his disposal. As time went on and I began to think myself capable of navigating the pitfalls on my own, I conferred with him less and less. Nevertheless I owe him a considerable debt of gratitude for his willingness to share his knowledge of the Russian Mennonite scene with such a novice in the field. It was also James Urry and Terry Martin who read the manuscript in its preliminary form some two years ago. They offered valuable advice, some of which I had the temerity to reject. Their observations nevertheless led me to rethink the structure of much of the manuscript, and this rethinking led to a massive rewriting. The rewriting was further informed by about two years of reading nothing but Russian history around the issues dealt with in the study. As a consequence, especially the two major central sections have been set into a much larger Russian context than had originally been the case, and other chapters have – at least from my perspective – become more focused and controlled.

A number of other scholars have read the manuscript, some only in its first incarnation, but others in both versions. Paul Toews, Peter Klassen and Abe Dueck have read both versions. John B. Toews, John Redekopp, Victor G. Doerksen, Harry Loewen, James Urry and Terry Martin read only the first rendering. John E. Toews has read only the final copy. To all these I extend my thanks for their comments and suggestions. But I must make it clear – for if I do not, they most certainly will – that none of the above bear any responsibility for the shortcomings or outright errors of this study. The responsibility for these lies with an aging historian who thought he could simply move from one field of history – mined now for some forty- two years – to another in which he was at best a dilettante, and write a passable history. Hopefully the reader will not judge him too harshly for his temerity. After all, he has already freely confessed his failings.

No parts of the above study have appeared in print though I have lectured on various aspects of the study over the years. For example, the inaugural lectures of the “John and Margaret Friesen Lectureship in Anabaptist/Mennonite Studies” at the Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, September 12 and 13, 2002 (three in number), were drawn from the manuscript, as was the lecture delivered at the Steinbach Mennonite Museum several weeks later. Aside from these and a few other lectures, the material contained in this study is presented here for the first time.

I wish to dedicate this book to the memory of my nephew, Douglas Andrew Friesen (1964-1998), who died an untimely death from the ravages of cancer, and to his wife Monica and their three children who survive him, Katherine, Richard and Sarah. Though Monica comes from a

Mennonite tradition other than the one her husband came from – the one portrayed in this book – may she and her lovely children nevertheless draw inspiration from the story as they explore the wider world of Mennonite history. At the same time I would here also like to remember the parents on both sides of Doug and Monica's family who suffered loss in the death of their son and son-in-law: Peter and Marilyn Friesen of Winkler, Manitoba, and Vernon P. and Twyla Hofer of Freeman, South Dakota. May the hope of eternity lessen the pain suffered in time.

Abraham Friesen  
July 20, 2005, Fresno, California  
Professor Emeritus,  
University of California at Santa Barbara

# Archival Collections & Abbreviations

## *Archival Collections:*

**American Baptist Historical Society:** (ABHS).

**H. J. Braun Papers (Braun Nachlass):** Privately held by Frau Irmgard Braun-Hörner, Ibersheim, Germany.

**Peter J. Braun Correspondence:** Mennonite Library & Archives (MLA), Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas.

**A. A. Friesen Papers:** Mennonite Library and Archives (MLA), Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas.

**Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization Collection:** Mennonite Heritage Centre (MHC), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

**Mennonite Central Committee Collection:** Mennonite Church Archives (MCA), Goshen, Indiana.

**B. B. Janz Papers:** Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies (CMBS), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

**Russian Relief Papers:** Mennonite Church Archives (MCA), Goshen, Indiana.

**C. Henry Smith Collection:** Mennonite Historical Library (MHL), Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio.

**Benjamin H. Unruh Papers:** Mennonite Library & Archives (MLA), Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas.

**Central State Historical Archives of Russia (CSHAofR):** St. Petersburg, Russia. Microfilm holdings in the Fresno, CA, Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies (FMBStC&A). These documents will be cited under the St. Petersburg Archive designation.

**State Archives of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Simferopol:** (SAofCr).

**Abbreviations:****Bericht**

**Bericht über die 400 jährige Jubiläumsfeier der Mennoniten oder Taufgesinnten.** Karlsruhe, 1925

**Beschlüsse:**

Heinrich Ediger. **Beschlüsse der von den geistlichen und anderen Vertretern der Mennonitengemeinden Russlands abgehaltenen Konferenzen für die Jahre 1879 bis 1913.** Berdiansk, 1914.

**Bt:** Der Botschafter, Berdiansk, 1906ff.

**Bote:** Der Bote, Rosthem, Sask., 193 1ff.

**Die Auswanderung:**

B. H. Unruh, **Die Auswanderung der niederdeutschen mennonitischen Bauern der Sowetunion, 1923-1933.** Manuscript in the Hoover Archives, Stanford University.

**Dokumente:**

**Dokumente über Glaubensangelegenheiten der Mennoniten.** Raduga, 1910. MHC.

**FrSt:** Friedensstimme, Raduga, 1905ff.

**JMS:** Journal of Mennonite Studies, Winnipeg, MB, 1983ff.

**MBI:** Mennonitische Blätter, Danzig, 1854ff.

**ME:** Mennonite Encyclopedia, 4 vols., 1955 - 1959.

**ML:** Mennonitisches Lexikon, 4 vols., 1913 - 1967.

**MQR:** The Mennonite Quarterly Review, Goshen, IN, 1927ff.

**MR:** Mennonitische Rundschau, Elkhart, IN, 1877ff.





## PART I

---

# **Prologue to Conflict:**

History, Historians, and  
the Recovery of a Heritage



# Introduction: A Russian Mennonite Parable

*Until the World War, I felt myself to be a Russian citizen; Germany was a foreign country to me. But the war brought one thing after another. The Russian intelligentsia decried us as “traitors” in the press and vilified us; the government refused to protect us and instead passed the land liquidation laws in order to drive us from hearth and home; and during the revolution and Makhno attacks the common people also turned against us. From discussions I had with soldiers who were themselves sons of farmers, and from the attitude of the surrounding Russians it became dreadfully clear to me: this Russian farmer, even though he may bear no personal animosity toward me, will not rest until he has driven the last German from his native soil and taken his place. In this way the government, the intelligentsia, and the common people had all turned against us; we, on the other hand, had become strangers in the land. Indeed, we had already been thrown out . . . .*

— Peter J. Braun to Jacob H. Janzen, 7 June, 1933

**I**n 1789, the year the French Revolution erupted spewing the masses onto the pages of history and unsettling crowned heads all over Europe, an ordinary group of predominantly Dutch believers calling themselves followers of the renegade sixteenth-century Dutch priest Menno Simons<sup>1</sup> – but highly prized by Russia’s Catherine the Great as model farmers – allowed themselves to be enticed to migrate to the land of the great Rus’ whose rulers still all fancied themselves heirs to the mighty Caesar and who, since Ivan the Terrible, had styled themselves “Autocrat of All the Russias.”<sup>2</sup> These sons and daughters of Menno had fled the Netherlands for a more tolerant Poland in the great age of religious strife known as the Protestant Reformation in order to escape the Spanish-Catholic fury of the Duke of Alba, widely known as the “Butcher of Flanders.”<sup>3</sup> Now, however, they appeared eager to forsake their adopted homeland because it was being swallowed up piecemeal by other autocrats: the warrior king of Prussia, Frederick the Great, and his less tolerant successor, Frederick William II. Initially nearly persecuted into oblivion by Protestant and Catholic rulers alike, these pioneers of a pacifist Christianity, beginning about 1601, had, for their

very survival, been forced to make a “pact with the devil” and enter into agreements known as *Schutzbriefe* (letters of protection) with their overlords in which they bartered away their Christian obligation to “preach the gospel to all creatures” and win converts to the faith. In return they were granted a limited religious toleration and the right, though tenuous at times, to exist. The same agreements forced them to become inconspicuous, to worship in ordinary houses so as not to attract the attention and perhaps the ire of the established churches, and, from time to time, to pay huge sums of protection money extorted from them by callous or overzealous rulers. Thus were the firebrands of the Reformation marginalized religiously and coerced into becoming “the quiet in the land.”

Having had their New Testament Christianity proscribed by Church and State alike, these Dutch Mennonites, through thrift and sobriety, gradually turned religious rejection into economic strength, eventually coming to be recognized as prized possessions in the new mercantilist economies of Europe’s Early Modern states. Though the prohibition against proselytizing was never lifted from their backs, most of the negative provisions of the *Schutzbriefe* were slowly replaced by more positive privileges, the most prized of all being the great *Privilegium* promised by Catherine the Great to Mennonites entering Russia in 1789 and granted in writing by Paul I in 1800. But no matter how highly prized the charter, the long-term effect of this royal “clemency” was to addict Mennonites to the arbitrary power of absolute rulers whose authority alone seemed able to sustain them and their privileges.<sup>4</sup> But what if a ruler should decide to turn against them, for whatever reason, as the Russian Tsar began to do after the revolution of 1905? Or if the abyss that had opened up with the French Revolution, catapulting angry proletarian “Jacobins and sans-culottes” across the land, should open up for them even in the land of the autocrat of all the Russias, as it did in 1917? Where, then, would they find succor, aliens that they were in a foreign land? For unlike the “shrewd steward” of Christ’s parable,<sup>5</sup> they had not curried favor with the Tsar’s increasingly alienated subjects during the years in which they fell out of favor with the imperial standard bearer. Rather, they had ignored them, looked down upon and disdained them. To add insult to injury, over the years they had bought up the best available land while steadfastly refusing to be assimilated into the nation or serve in its military. Nor was the Duma, created in 1905 as a counterweight to the Tsar, filled with their friends. And when the war with Germany broke out in 1914 they, as “Germans,” were regarded enemies in the midst of a beleaguered nation, enemies who had even sought to subvert the “land of their salvation” by making Russians into Germans through conversion to Protestantism.

Yet all the while they, as “enemy aliens,” continued to enjoy centuries-old privileges nearly every Russian believed should long since have been abolished. To do so while a semblance of legality remained in the land was difficult, however, for the Mennonite privileges had been written into the country’s fundamental laws. Nor did Mennonites wish to sacrifice those privileges, being persuaded that they alone stood between them and that other abyss, the abyss of assimilation with a lesser people and consequent annihilation as a *Völklein*. And so they clung to their privileges even after it became apparent that they had become an albatross around their collective necks.

The centerpiece of virtually every Mennonite request for privileged status among the subjects of Europe’s emerging nation states<sup>6</sup> – once a basic religious freedom had come into existence after the French Revolution – was always the same: exemption from military service.<sup>7</sup> It was a request based upon their belief in Christian nonresistance, a principle Mennonites originally understood to be central to Christ’s ethic as proclaimed in his Sermon on the Mount<sup>8</sup> and reinforced by apostolic teaching and the life of the early church. Initially, Early Modern states were relatively indifferent to this idiosyncrasy because of the mercenary nature of sixteenth and seventeenth-century warfare. Only later, after the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars had forced entire nations to mobilize, did European countries increasingly begin to make military service a universal civic obligation. Democratic reforms, especially after the 1848 Revolution, only made the demand for uniformity in this regard more insistent. Not unexpectedly, therefore, the Prussian Mennonites’ exemption from military service that had been agreed to by earlier, more unfettered rulers, also gradually came under attack, most insistently in the post-1848 Prussian legislature.<sup>9</sup> Here, after a lengthy discussion, a bill was finally introduced on 28 January, 1861 to abolish the privilege. Anxious Mennonites immediately sought for ways to persuade the Prussian legislature to retain the exemption. To accomplish their goal they engaged the services of a young *Privatdozent* (lecturer) from the University of Berlin by the name of Wilhelm Mannhardt to prepare a scholarly defense of their beliefs. He did so in a very able historical treatise that traced the principle, as a central article of the Anabaptist/Mennonite faith, to its inception in the age of the Reformation. Upon publication, the document was presented to the people’s representatives in the legislature. Although the study has since persuaded many scholars, at the time it had virtually no impact upon the Prussian politicians: the Mennonites’ attempt to influence the formulation of the government’s public policy proved a failure. More appallingly, however, the study even failed to convince its own author. When, therefore, his clients had suffered a definitive defeat in the Pruss-

ian legislature, Mannhardt mounted an extended argument against the very principle Mennonites had been seeking to preserve, doing so in a series of articles published in the Mennonites' own scholarly journal.<sup>10</sup> He had originally been told, Mannhardt argued, that all Prussian Mennonites believed in nonresistance; but once the law had removed the exemption he had discovered this not to be the case. In fact, he asserted, only a few individuals in positions of power still held to the "old Anabaptist dogma." The rest were indifferent.<sup>11</sup> The leaders, he charged, had simply attempted to retain a privilege, originally based on religious conviction, which hardly anyone held or practiced any longer. Not even Menno Simons, he proclaimed, had at first been a pacifist; only after the failure of the 1534-1535 Münster revolution had he become one out of political expediency.

In virtually every part of Europe during the Middle Ages, and in many countries well into the seventeenth century, agreements like the earlier charters of liberties and later *Schutzbriefe* had been commonplace between districts, groups, estates, cities, etc. and their respective overlords.<sup>12</sup> Cities in the Holy Roman Empire negotiated with the Emperor for specific, and often unique, freedoms, many of them gradually becoming "free imperial cities." Other cities, under secular or ecclesiastical territorial overlords, bargained for freedoms through negotiations; at times wars were fought over such rights and privileges. Even monasteries and convents acquired their own freedoms. Cities, like London, had their charter of liberties. And great nobles – as at Runnymede in 1215 – negotiated the *Magna Carta* with King John of England. Such special privileges could still be had from an overlord in the seventeenth century,<sup>13</sup> even though more centralized and uniform "nation states" were beginning to make them increasingly difficult to acquire. As the latter process advanced, reaching its high water mark in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Mennonites eventually came to be faced with essentially three choices: they could continue to emigrate to politically under-developed countries where arbitrary rulers might still offer them the privileges they desired; they could seek out more advanced, democratic countries where religious liberty was the norm but where they would have difficulty acquiring a blanket exemption from the increasingly universal obligation to serve in the military; or they could compromise their principles and accommodate themselves to the changing conditions in countries where they lived. The Prussian Mennonite reaction to the gradual imposition of universal military service in their country exemplified all three of these responses: some congregations left for the United States where there was broad religious liberty but no guaranteed exemption from military service; others left for autocratic Russia and the Tsarina's great *Privi-*

*legium* with its promise of “eternal” exemption from military service; still others, however, remained in the land, eventually accommodating themselves to the prevailing military requirement and gradually becoming ardent Prussians. Such a sequence of events was not unique to Prussia.

By the time Prussian Mennonites were forced to choose between these alternatives their reliance upon autocratic rulers had very nearly become an article of faith, especially for the more conservative amongst them.<sup>14</sup> Mistrust of the masses, a legacy from the days of the Reformation but now reinforced and intensified by the “terror” unleashed by the French Revolution,<sup>15</sup> only increased their dependence on arbitrary rule and encouraged them to close their eyes to the many instances in which monarchs had breached their trust. Historical amnesia conspired to confirm them in this approach. Yet precisely their own history could have put them on their guard.<sup>16</sup> Even after being warned by high-ranking Russian government officials themselves not to do so, they continued to place an inordinate amount of faith in the privileges granted by absolute rulers. For example, in 1867 Alexander Klaus, a high ranking official in the Ministry of Crown Domains which oversaw the Russian colonies, openly informed the Russian Mennonites that all agreements reached with autocrats were at best temporary. Speaking of the covenant reached between the Moravian Brethren and the Russian Imperial government in his *Nashi Kolonii* (Our Colonies), Klaus wrote:

... This document, both in form and content, has nothing in common with a private, mutually binding agreement. It is [rather] the expression of an autocratic, legislative power; an expression which, like every law that has outlived its time, can be changed or [even] abrogated by that same autocratic power. Even the Sareptaers [the Moravian Brethren] understood their charter of privileges in this way; otherwise they would not have requested the renewal of their privileges in the years 1801, 1826, and 1856, that is, with the inauguration of every new government.<sup>17</sup>

Only a few years later, after the Russian government had indeed broken its “eternal covenant” with the Mennonites and passed a universal conscription law, Martin Klaassen, one of their own, quoted Valuev, Minister of Internal Affairs, as having stated categorically in an audience with Mennonite deputies: “The laws, made by a government, are all more or less subject to change depending on the circumstances of the time; only the laws given by God are permanent and unalterable.”<sup>18</sup> Both responses implied that it lay in the very nature of autocratic rule to be able to do whatever it wished. On occasion, if this suited its purposes, it could grant privileges. On other occasions it could just as easily abrogate them. But not even the statements of government officials,

and the actions they were intended to justify, could stop Martin Klaassen and the majority of his fellow Russian Mennonites from continuing to speak of the "eternity" of the great *Privilegium*.

Documents in the St. Petersburg archives, however, clearly demonstrate that the Russian Mennonites were not as sanguine about the "eternity" of their privileges as their public statements might lead one to believe. Already in March of 1818 they petitioned the imperial government "to affirm all of the rights and privileges that were given them by Emperor Paul I in 1800."<sup>19</sup> The Ministry of Internal Affairs responded by arguing that such confirmation was unnecessary, but the Mennonite representatives persisted, arguing "that in the countries of their previous residence kings usually confirmed the promises made by their predecessors." Furthermore, they contended, more Prussian Mennonites were still entering the country and they, too, wished to have these privileges confirmed.<sup>20</sup> Once again the government insisted this was unnecessary, but the Mennonites persisted in their request. In October of 1826 they reiterated their request. The privileges, they said, had been promised by Catherine the Great, confirmed and put in writing by Paul I, but had not been confirmed by Alexander I. Since the latter had visited their colonies and shown exceptional kindness to them, they had not bothered him with this request. But since he too had now passed away, they would like His Majesty to confirm all the rights and privileges granted them.<sup>21</sup> The Guardian Committee itself became involved, but even it could not persuade the government to change its position.<sup>22</sup> Only once more was the great *Privilegium* confirmed: under Nicholas I in 1838. These repeated requests to have every new tsar confirm the "eternity" of the 1800 *Privilegium* demonstrate, more than anything else, the Russian Mennonites' unspoken fear that arbitrary rule could be capricious. When that fear became reality with the government's attempt to deprive them of their military exemption only a few years later in the early 1870s roughly one-third of them gave expression to their disillusionment by migrating to North America.

As was the case in most European countries, Russia's universal conscription law was the product of the appearance of an increasingly powerful nationalist sentiment in the country during the 1860s. Spearheaded by conservative propagandists, the new nationalism constituted a major challenge to the Russian Mennonites in the form of the government's program of Russification. Designed to assimilate Mennonites and other ethnic minorities into Russian society, old privileges based upon sacred and eternal covenants were eliminated and the special status of the Mennonite colonies revoked in 1871, just three years before universal military service was imposed. The changes brought about in Russian society during these years, as Alexander Klaus



observed, fundamentally altered the Mennonites' relationship to the state in that it attempted to put them on an equal footing with all other segments of society,<sup>23</sup> thereby placing all of their privileges in jeopardy.

Another of the privileges Mennonites had been granted in 1789 was the right "to follow their faith and church practices unhindered." But while they could practice their own faith unhindered, they were not allowed to win others to it. Indeed, prospective settlers were specifically prohibited from proselytizing among the Orthodox in both Catherine's 1763 invitation<sup>24</sup> and the law of the land, though not in Paul's great *Privilegium*. Perhaps because the Mennonites had already accommodated themselves to similar restrictions in other countries before they entered Russia they have left no indication whatsoever that this was of concern to them.<sup>25</sup> Only later, after the religious revivals of the late 1850s, the birth of the Mennonite Brethren Church in 1860, and the coming of the German Baptists in the years immediately following, did the prohibition become an issue. When that happened, conservative Mennonites asserted that such proselytizing could well place the Mennonites' privileges in jeopardy.

Proselytizing by Mennonites among the Orthodox, especially at a time when their special status was already under attack by the state due to the rise of a Russian nationalism, exacerbated already-existing tensions resulting from the schism of 1860 between the Mennonite Brethren and their Old Church brothers; but it also created tensions between the Mennonite Brethren and the Russian government. These religious tensions should have abated, if not disappeared altogether, with St. Petersburg's promulgation of the April and October 1905 manifestos promising complete religious freedom to all Russians. The government's promises were never fulfilled, however, and so expectation and reality quickly came into conflict. At first this only created confusion in Mennonite ranks; later, however, confusion was followed by apprehension and consternation. In the midst of the confusion, the government sought to rescind what it had promised, even attempting to curtail what religious freedom Mennonites had originally been granted by changing their religious status from that of a legally established "confession" (as the non-Orthodox foreign churches were called) to that of a "sect" with all of their pre-1905 legal liabilities and negative connotations. Not only did the government attempt to do this to the surreptitiously proselytizing Mennonite Brethren, which might have been understandable; it did it also to the non-proselytizing Old Church Mennonites.

To defend their confessional status, Mennonites joined together and mounted an extensive campaign to persuade the government, first, that complete religious freedom had indeed been granted them in 1905,

including the right of religious propaganda; and, second, that it was illegitimate to designate them a sect since they stood in a direct line of descent from the Apostolic Church. To make the latter case, Mennonites enlisted the aid of Ludwig Keller's interpretation of Anabaptist/Mennonite history introduced to them in 1897 by David H. Epp, but for very different reasons. As the conflict with the state grew and new dimensions were added, Epp began to realize that the Münster archivist could become useful to them in these conflicts. As a result, he began to insert Keller's interpretation of Anabaptist/Mennonite origins into documents directed to persuade the government of the Mennonite positions.

Aside from their military exemption and the right to follow their faith and church practices unhindered, Mennonites had also been settled in closed communities when they entered the country.<sup>26</sup> Whether by government design or Mennonite predilection,<sup>27</sup> such closed communities contributed to the Mennonites' isolation from the local population and affected their relationship with it. On the other hand, such communities also helped to preserve the Mennonite identity as an ethnic, linguistic, religious, and cultural minority.<sup>28</sup> By 1860, however, nationalistic and pan-Slavic forces had persuaded the government to change its settlement policy and attempt to integrate the foreign colonists into Russian society. Its thrust in this direction was at least fourfold. First, it attempted to rescind the Mennonite's military exemption in 1873-74.<sup>29</sup> Secondly, it sought to bring Mennonite schools under governmental control. Thirdly, it sought to enforce the universal use of the Russian language, mandating that all subjects in the Mennonite schools except the German language and religion be taught in the Russian language. And, lastly, it limited Mennonite self-government through the introduction of its *zemstva* system which brought extensive local self-government to the Russian countryside.<sup>30</sup>

The Russian government achieved greater success in some of these areas than in others. Educational and governmental reforms could be, and were, at least to a degree implemented. But even these were limited by the fact that Mennonites lived in closed communities. The latter successfully resisted the attempt to take away their military service exemption. While they were not against learning the Russian language, they resisted becoming russified, continuing to nurture German as the language of faith and culture.<sup>31</sup> And, nearly as tenaciously as they clung to their nonresistance, they valued their communal isolation where they spoke their Low German dialect and practiced their Mennonite faith. In spite of the Mennonite resistance, however, Russian society did begin to make inroads into their communities with Russian peasants being elected to the local governing councils and Russian teachers

appointed to their schools. The Mennonites' closed settlements, however, severely limited the government's success.<sup>32</sup>

Mennonite communities were thus physically as well as culturally and religiously separated from their Russian neighbors, Peter Braun asserting as late as 1922 that "well into the present time, we were nearly completely isolated from the essential realities [in Russia]." Their Russian neighbors were different, still partially enserfed, and agriculturally backwards, even though those in "New Russia" were not as oppressed as in most other parts of Russia.<sup>33</sup> Mennonites looked down upon them with a sense of superiority confirmed by their more advanced way of life. Their agricultural methods and entrepreneurial prowess soon brought them considerable wealth, further accentuating the differences between them and their peasant neighbors.<sup>34</sup> Nor did the emancipation of the peasants in 1861 immediately improve the latter's condition; indeed, according to Sergei Zhuk, emancipation worsened it, especially in the Ukraine. It also worsened the economic condition of the Russian landlords who had now to pay for peasant labor, driving up their expenses to such an extent that many were forced to sell off large parcels of land at reduced rates. Wealthy Mennonite colonies – faced with a land hunger among their own people at the time – took advantage of the depressed prices to purchase land on which to establish daughter colonies. A considerable number of such colonies, erected on some of the best land available, were thus established in the '80s and '90s. Along with the creation of a network of railroads that transported their agricultural and industrial products to the larger cities, Russian Mennonites entered a period of wealth and prosperity that surpassed the norm in the country. Around the turn of the century, many individual Mennonites even established themselves as landlords, residing on landed estates known as *khutors*. Mennonites imported or manufactured their own advanced agricultural implements, built their own hospitals, created their own insurance agencies, and cared for their mentally ill and otherwise infirm. They were model farmers in every respect, but their innovations and expertise had relatively little impact upon the surrounding Russian peasant society.<sup>35</sup> Throughout this period they remained largely isolated: Germanic, wealthy, and, with some notable exceptions, apparently quite unconcerned about their peasant neighbors except to exploit the cheap labor on their estates and in their emerging manufacturing industries. Only in one major respect did some of them, especially amongst the Mennonite Brethren, seek to break out of their isolation: but that was in order to spread their evangelical Christian faith among their Orthodox Ukrainian neighbors. As we have already seen, however, this was not the kind of interaction either the Russian Orthodox Church or the Russian government desired.

Although the Russian Mennonite *Privilegium* had therefore been eroded over the years, the centerpiece of exemption from military service was still largely intact when World War I broke out. But the war that pitted Russia against Germany made this exemption not only a source of jealousy and resentment on the part of surrounding inhabitants, it also led to accusations of espionage and subversion against the colonists and to the passage of anti-German legislation, such as the government's land liquidation laws issued in February and December of 1915. Earlier legislation had merely attacked the Mennonites' privileged status; land liquidation, however, imperiled their very existence. As a consequence, they found themselves involved in a very different kind of struggle with the government. Ludwig Keller's interpretation of Anabaptist/Mennonite history proved to be useful in this battle as well, but not as useful as it had been in the "Sect/Confession" quarrel. Therefore other historical arguments had to be introduced. But Mennonites soon realized that arguments based upon historical analyses, no matter how cogent, did not necessarily persuade government officials in such weighty matters. They needed something more substantial, something that government officials in all times and all places have always readily understood: cold hard cash. But what was the real price of bribery? Was it too high a price to pay to avoid being dispossessed and transported, like cattle, to Siberia and a frozen grave?

Whereas land liquidation turned out to be the ultimate sign of Mennonite abandonment by the Tsarist government, it was not until the Romanov dynasty was deposed and anarchist terror began to stalk the land (to be followed by the Communist Revolution and civil war) that Russian Mennonites realized the full extent of the ordinary Russian's animosity toward them. The latter, set an example by the Tsarist government during the war, now deemed it his turn to take advantage of the general chaos to dispossess the Mennonites and inherit the land. Aided and abetted in this nefarious ambition by Makhno anarchists and CHEKA agents, these groups brought the chaos of the French Revolution that Mennonites had feared for so long to Russia. And in its wake the abyss from which that revolution had sprung also opened up before them. Had it not been for the helping hand extended to Russian Mennonites by their brothers and sisters in distant lands, the revolutionary abyss would undoubtedly have devoured them. As it was, they only suffered an excruciating fate.

The Russian Mennonite parable did not have a happy ending. Indeed, there were no winners in our story; even the lessons to be learned have remained in dispute. In this regard it was different from Christ's parable of the shrewd steward. The Tsar, "Autocrat of All the Russias," together with his entire family, was brutally murdered by cal-

lous communist thugs; nobles, collaborators of the Tsar, were either put to the sword or fled into exile; Mennonites who escaped the abyss were scarred for life while those who could not escape were eventually all dispossessed, with thousands exiled to Siberia or killed by Communist agents; and the common people who at first contributed to and took pleasure in the initial plight of the Mennonites were themselves quickly oppressed by a regime perhaps more monstrous than any other known in the annals of history. Even the most intimate of the Great Oppressor's (Stalin's) accomplices were gradually purged or assassinated in the sequel to the parable. No one could avoid the long reach of the avenging archangel, not even the Great Oppressor himself. And so the revolution that was to have abolished humanity's ills and established the classless society, the kingdom of God on earth secularized, instead quickly and relentlessly began to devour its own children. It was as though God had poured all seven vials of his wrath upon the Russian people at once. Seventy years it took for the curse to be lifted from the land. The healing of the land may take another seventy.

Could Mennonites have done anything to change the course of this Russian history, even if they had not clung so tenaciously to their vaunted privileges or had not so adamantly resisted Russification and assimilation? Could they have ameliorated the consequences for themselves had they acted differently? As an ethno-religious *Völklein* in the midst of an alien *Volk*, they were, after all, at the mercy of Russia's historical development, however determined or self-directed it may have been. The only thing Russian Mennonites could have controlled was their responses to the various actions taken against them by the Russian people and their government, responses that began with their "defense of privilege" and ended with their attempts to bribe Russian officials in the land liquidation crisis. It is easy to be principled in a time of peace, more difficult in a time of crisis. Did the Russian Mennonites allow their religious principles to determine their responses in this their crisis? Or did they allow expediency to dictate how they reacted? Did they overcome events or did events overcome them? And how did their actions affect their character? These questions have as yet hardly been asked, never mind answered. But they must be asked and answered if we are ever to come to grips with who we, as their descendants, really are. No longer can we do what David Rempel accused Russian Mennonites of doing in a 1977 letter to the author. There he wrote: "My general acquaintanceship with Russian Mennonite writings on any important aspect of their long sojourn in that empire, and my experiences in practice with different groups of members of our brotherhood on somewhat controversial issues of our life in that country, have unfortunately led me to the conclusion that too many of our peo-

ple prefer to hear or read about that experience not so much as the event actually occurred but as they wished to have it happen.” Such an approach – which has probably contributed to the Russian Mennonites’ dislike of the critical historian – has long since become untenable.

Jacob H. Janzen, friend and correspondent of Peter Braun, along with A. A. Friesen, were the only Russian Mennonites I know of who spoke out against every kind of privilege at the time. Janzen did so at a 1919 conference of Mennonites in Russia when Mennonite conditions were probably at their worst.<sup>36</sup> He confirmed his position later on in his memoirs when he wrote:

The reader will already have concluded that, although I grew up in the *Forstei*, and served there as a man, I never became a friend of the *Forstei* and its service. Nor am I a friend of privileges, for I consider them to be unjust even if they were conferred by the highest authority, and even if we possess and enjoy these privileges which others do not have.<sup>37</sup>

Friesen did so in his 1921/1922 manuscript, “Thoughts on the Present Condition of the Mennonites in Russia and Prospects for Immigration.” There he wrote:

. . . It would also be my desire that the new [Russian] government – hopefully a truly democratic one – would treat the question of nonresistance on a purely individual basis, as does the USA. Were that to happen, *we would no longer be in the hypocritical position of having to claim that we were born nonresistant and no longer in a position of privilege.* . . . This way one would not have to fear that the principle of nonresistance would be attacked by the state. . . .<sup>38</sup>

Two major thrusts in the Russian Mennonite defense of their privileges form the centerpiece of the present study. The first has to do with the Mennonites’ religious status in the realm and whether or not freedom of religion, including the right of religious proselytism, had truly been granted to all Russian subjects in the 1905 manifestos. In time this quarrel came to center on the issue whether Mennonites should continue to be classified as a relatively independent confession of foreign origin, or as a sect. The second was much more serious, indeed life-threatening: it had to do with the land liquidation laws of February and December, 1915 directed against all German enemy nationals. These two themes lie at the center of the present study. But they are sandwiched between a ‘prologue’ to the conflict and the Russian Mennonites’ search for identity in the war’s aftermath.

This study, then, consists of four distinct but related parts. Part I is entitled: “Prologue to Conflict: History, Historians, and the Recovery of a Heritage.” Aside from the introduction, it consists of three chap-

ters that deal with different aspects of the Russian Mennonites' awakening to the importance of history as a discipline and their own history as a people, all of which are important to the two main themes of the study. Chapter II contains a discussion of who wrote the anonymous *Kto takie Mennonity*, long considered central to the land liquidation crisis, and a number of more easily identifiable pieces used in the Sect/Confession debate. Chapter III then treats the emergence of an historical consciousness among Russian Mennonites and their unconscious use of "public history" during the two crises, while Chapter IV traces the Russian Mennonites' recovery of their own "Anabaptist Vision." This vision, derived from the writings of Ludwig Keller, was to play a signal role in the Russian Mennonites' "defense of privilege," but was already recognized as fundamentally flawed by the time the Russian Mennonites began to employ it.

Part II, entitled: "Religious Minorities and the Orthodox State: Mennonites and the Politics of Religion after the April/October 1905 Manifestos," also consists of the four chapters. Although the entire section deals with the "Sect/Confession" issue, and was originally conceived as one chapter with four parts, it has now been divided into four separate chapters. Part III, entitled: "Ethnic Minorities and the War: Mennonite Isolation, Opposition to Russification, and the coming of Land Liquidation," also originally one chapter with four parts, deals essentially with the context and causes of the land liquidation laws during the war and is now also divided into four separate chapters. Part IV, entitled: "The War, its Aftermath, and the Russian Mennonite Search for Identity," consists of three further chapters and an epilogue. Chapter 7 deals with the effects of the war on Russian Mennonite identity, while Chapter 8 treats the problem of emigration and its impact on the Russian Mennonite search for identity. Chapter 9, which traces the problem through the Second World War, makes it apparent that the next generation of Russian Mennonites had learned very little, if anything, from the experiences of their forebears in World War I. Once more, Mennonite ignorance of history was on display. The study closes with an epilogue that seeks to trace the development of a Russian Mennonite identity in schematic fashion from its roots in the Netherlands to its temporary culmination in Canada. It is at best impressionistic.





## In Search of Authors

Most recently Professor Roland H. Bainton has reviewed the evidence of authorship in an article, "Erasmus and Luther and the Dialog *Julius Exclusus*" prepared for the Franz Lau *Festschrift*, in which he concludes (p. 3) "... after surveying all the evidence and after reading the dialog itself, one ends with the powerful impression that Erasmus had a major part in the composition even though another may have supplied some of the details." In addition to strictly internal and external evidence heretofore cited, it might also be observed that every fact or prejudice expressed in the dialog is one which Erasmus had opportunity to know or which we can substantiate as his. This includes both his information and – what is even more illuminating – his misinformation.

— J. Kelly Sowards on the 1517 anonymously published *Julius Excluded from Heaven*

It is perhaps only fitting that the anonymously published document, *Kto takie Mennonity*<sup>1</sup> ("Who are the Mennonites?"), used in the Mennonite attempt to gain exemption from the land liquidation laws of 1915 (discussed in Part III of this study) has been attributed to David H. Epp, editor of *Der Botschafter*, teacher, preacher in the Old Colony of Chortitza, Chairman of the *Kommission für Kirchliche Angelegenheiten* (Commission for Church-Related Affairs),<sup>2</sup> and author of a number of historical studies.<sup>3</sup> So dominating a personality was he among Russian Mennonites at the turn of the nineteenth century that it has been argued that even if Epp did not write the anonymous document under consideration, he must surely have had a hand in its composition.<sup>4</sup> This assumption may have its origin in the fact that Epp did indeed write a number of similar documents, some of which were also published anonymously, documents, however, that were employed primarily in another quarrel with the Russian government after 1908: the quarrel over whether Russian Mennonites within the empire were to be classified as a sect or a confession. Epp's documents, whose authorship can readily be determined, will therefore constitute a major aspect of the Part II of this study.<sup>5</sup>

Even though the two sets of documents deal with very different issues, the problem of Mennonite origins is central to both groups. In the sect/confession quarrel Mennonites sought to demonstrate who they were ecclesiologically; in the land liquidation crisis, who they were racially. The caption, "Who are the Mennonites?" was therefore used in

both quarrels and both sets of documents, but with quite different purposes in mind. The interpretation of Mennonite origins nevertheless remained constant throughout and it was Epp who introduced – though he did not create – the interpretation in question (as we shall see in Chapter IV). Given the above facts, it was perhaps only natural that Epp should have come to be regarded as the author of *Kto takie Mennonity*. But he was not the author, and this chapter shall provide the convincing proof of that fact.

*Kto takie Mennonity* was printed in at least two editions (1914 and 1915), neither of which bears the name of an author. Both were published by the Raduga Press of Halbstadt, Molotschna.<sup>6</sup> According to Benjamin H. Unruh, a third edition was planned; he does not indicate, however, whether it was to be in the original Russian language or in a German translation.<sup>7</sup> David G. Rempel, indeed, spoke of “three different issues of this booklet,” as though a third edition had rolled off the press.<sup>8</sup> Thus far, however, no published third edition has surfaced.

Had David H. Epp been the author, it is doubtful that the booklet would have been published by Raduga, for virtually everything Epp wrote after 1911 was published by Ediger in Berdiansk.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the principal owner of the Raduga Press was Heinrich J. Braun, graduate of the Hamburg/Horn Baptist seminary, Rückenau MB minister, member with David H. Epp of the three-man *KfK*, and chair or member of so many boards of Russian Old Church / Mennonite Brethren institutions and agencies that it boggles the academic mind.<sup>10</sup> The fact that the booklet was published in Halbstadt at Raduga, sometimes “accused” of being an “MB” press,<sup>11</sup> may point in another, possibly MB direction even though fundamentally the document addresses an inter-Mennonite issue: the denunciation of Mennonite and German colonists as enemy aliens by ardent right-wing nationalists and the subsequent attempt to liquidate their lands. If there was anyone who had a personal stake in the latter issue, it was Heinrich J. Braun.<sup>12</sup> He was the owner of two large *khutors*<sup>13</sup> consisting of 661 dessiatines of land worth, at the time, some 297,450 Russian rubles.<sup>14</sup> And, as it turned out, the Raduga Press itself was eventually included among the “German” assets to be liquidated.<sup>15</sup> As a principal owner and director of the press, and operator of its affiliated bookstores in Neu-Halbstadt and Schoenwiese – the latter run by D. P. Isaak – H. J. Braun was affected by the liquidation law here as well. Perhaps we might say, as David Rempel said with reference to David H. Epp: if H. J. Braun did not write the document himself, he must at least have had a hand in its composition. Indeed, that is precisely what Benjamin H. Unruh implied in a letter to H. J. Braun of 24 February, 1944:

. . . The Brauns are East Frisians," Unruh wrote. "East Friesland never belonged to 'Holland.' You must substitute 'Low Countries' for the term 'Holland.' We must finally rid ourselves of the primitive Mennonite terminology. That terminology has done us much harm. I am still surprised that *you* did not first discuss these matters at the time with Unruh [with himself], the historian of church and dogma. Your able brother Peter, after all, had a Russian, not a West European, higher education. *His monograph* 'Kto takie mennonity?' manifests precisely those weaknesses I have just discussed [my emphasis].<sup>16</sup>

This letter does at least three things: First, it clearly demonstrates Unruh's disagreement with certain aspects of the argument contained in the booklet. Second, it points to H. J. Braun's involvement (and Unruh's exclusion) in the origin of the document. Third, it unequivocally names H. J. Braun's younger brother, Peter – at the time teacher in the Halbstadt Central School<sup>17</sup> – as the sole author.<sup>18</sup> Unruh repeats this assertion in his *Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen im 16., 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (The Lowlands-Low German Background to the Eastward Migration of Mennonites in the 16<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> Century),<sup>19</sup> a study that is in many ways his ultimate response to the arguments presented in *Kto takie Mennonity*.<sup>20</sup> There, on page 123, Unruh wrote: "In 1915 there appeared, in the Russian language, the publication 'Kto takije mennonity?' by Peter J. Braun." And in a footnote he observed: "Peter J. Braun, *Kto takije mennonity?* (Wer sind die Mennoniten?), Halbstadt, 1915. The archive copy made available to me in a most generous manner represents a revision that was to appear as a third edition, but no longer anonymously. However, I do not know whether a third edition ever did actually appear."<sup>21</sup>

Unruh's correspondence with Braun makes it apparent that he had a number of Braun's manuscripts in his possession. His Hoover Archive (Stanford University) manuscript on the Post World War I Mennonite emigration movement,<sup>22</sup> and the above footnote, confirm this. At one time Braun had enlisted Unruh's help in finding a publisher for his *Mennonitischer Schulrat* (The Mennonite School Board),<sup>23</sup> though without success. But Unruh was clearly not asked to do the same with a possible third edition of *Kto takie Mennonity* since the manuscript copy he possessed was, as Unruh himself later indicated, given him by Braun's wife after her husband's death in September, 1933. Along with many others, the Braun documents in Unruh's possession were apparently lost or destroyed toward the end of World War II. Nevertheless, there is hard evidence that a third edition had been prepared: it exists in a manuscript copy of a German translation of the Russian original prepared by Peter Braun the younger, the son of Peter J. Braun's older brother Jacob, Raduga's accountant.<sup>24</sup> And this manuscript, never pub-

lished, unequivocally lists Peter J. Braun as the author, as Benjamin Unruh's note suggested it would. I was given a copy of this German translation some six years ago by Irmgard Braun-Hörner, a niece to Peter J. Braun and daughter of his youngest brother, Abraham. The translation was probably prepared sometime between 1932-1933, just before Peter J. Braun died,<sup>25</sup> and represents the author's definitive statement on the subject.<sup>26</sup> All of this would appear to indicate that whereas the document is generally regarded as having originated as a response to the threat of the Russian government's liquidation laws which became a reality in February and December, 1915, in the mind of its author it represented much more, otherwise he would not have sought to publish a third, revised, translated and expanded, edition in Germany over fifteen years after its initial appearance.

The above facts make it quite apparent that *Kto takie Mennonity* was written by Peter J. Braun. His brother, Heinrich J., however, may well have instigated the project. Nor is there any mention in the evidence of a role played by David H. Epp. While he obviously had no hand in writing the document, he may have played a related role: supplying documents from the Chortiza archives he was so thoroughly familiar with. According to David Rempel, Epp actively sought for evidence to send directly to the Russian government during these years that would prove the Dutch ancestry of the Russian Mennonites.<sup>27</sup> However, David Epp may not have had quite the monetary incentive that Heinrich J. Braun had in this matter.<sup>28</sup>

Nearly all of the above information would have been available to David Rempel when he wrote his 1973 essay on Russian Mennonite historiography in which he made his statement about Epp's possible authorship of the document, since Benjamin Unruh laid virtually all of it out in the tenth of his 1935-37 essay series published in *Der Bote* under the general heading: "Preliminary Considerations for a Scholarly Clarification of the Origin of the German Mennonites living in Russia."<sup>29</sup> In the introduction to that essay, Unruh wrote:

Before me lies the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of P. J. Braun's 1915 Russian language pamphlet "Kto takije Mennonity?" (Who are the Mennonites?), published by the Raduga Press of Halbstadt (Taurida). The archival copy, most graciously made available to me by the wife of this colleague, represents a revision that was to be published as a third edition, this time no longer anonymously. Whether or not that has occurred, is unknown to me.<sup>30</sup>

Having said this, Unruh launched into a fairly detailed discussion of Braun's document, at least of those parts of interest to him.<sup>31</sup>

It has generally been assumed – indeed, the German manuscript itself indicates as much – that the booklet was written as a response to

the threat of the liquidation of land held by German colonists in Russia early in World War I.<sup>32</sup> The first edition, approved for publication by the military censors on 26 November, 1914,<sup>33</sup> would then clearly have been written, and published, before the first of these laws was passed on 2 February, 1915. It would even have been written though not approved<sup>34</sup> before the 7 October, 1914 meeting of the Russian government's Council of Ministers where, according to David Rempel, "the question of the desirability of confiscating enemy capital was considered, the consensus of opinion was against such an act but favored a proposal by M. Sazonov to liquidate the ownership and tenure of all land held by enemy nationals."<sup>35</sup> The desirability of such action, however, had already been advocated by ardent nationalists in the press for some time,<sup>36</sup> so that the first edition may be seen as an attempt to forestall official government action on the issue. If this is true, the booklet clearly sought to influence official Tsarist governmental public policy on the matter.<sup>37</sup>

The first edition was apparently printed in very limited numbers. An expanded second edition was approved by the military censors on 26 June, 1915, well after the first liquidation law of 2 February, 1915 had been passed. That Peter Braun's *Kto takie Mennonity* was indeed a response to other issues than only the liquidation of land confronting Russian Mennonites on the eve of World War I is indicated by one of the persons most intimately involved in Mennonite/Russian governmental relations at the time – Johann H. Willms.<sup>38</sup> In one of a series of articles written for *Der Bote* in 1926 under the general heading: "A Contribution to the History of the Emigration Movement: Recollections and Impressions,"<sup>39</sup> Willms wrote, discussing the action of the Russian government and ardent nationalists against its ethnic minorities:

During the war years there appeared a brochure entitled "The Mennonite Sect" written by the ministry official [*Ministerialbeamten*] Bondar, a man who, as the government inspector at our church general conferences, was an almost constant presence among us. We, on our part, attempted to deflect his attacks [*die Spitze brechen*] with the publication of our *apology* [my emphasis], "Who are the Mennonites?" Whether or not this document was the critical factor for the officials of the last Czarist ministry in their suspension [or non-enforcement] of the land liquidation laws, shall not be investigated here.<sup>40</sup>

This more general anti-foreign, especially anti-Mennonite, ethnic minority attitude in Russia, especially anti-Mennonite, is also referenced by David H. Epp himself in a series of articles also published in *Der Bote* in 1924 under the title: "The Importance of Mennonite Colonization in Russia."<sup>41</sup> There, on 18 June, 1924, Epp wrote:

From what has been said, we see how hostility toward Mennonites manifested itself, beginning about the mid-point of the last century, in a portion of the Russian populace and even the government itself. One began to speak of a specific mission Mennonites had as new citizens of Russia, even though such a mission had never been mentioned at the beginning of their settlement; they were accused of not raising the level of the Russian peoples' education; that they had not allowed themselves to be assimilated by the surrounding society; that they had achieved a high economic standard. From these factors Bondar concluded their political unreliability. The contradictory nature of this conclusion points to the tendentious and unfounded character of these accusations.<sup>42</sup>

Nowhere, however, does Epp bring Braun's *Kto takie Mennonity* into any connection with Bondar's accusations; indeed, to my knowledge, Epp nowhere so much as mentions Braun's booklet. Nevertheless, when one reads Braun's document carefully, it becomes evident that the author addresses issues much more diverse than simply the ethnic and linguistic origin of the Russian Mennonites: that they were of Dutch, not German, extraction and that the liquidation laws ought therefore not to apply to them. As we shall see, it addresses also the issue of whether the Mennonites in Russia were to be considered a sect or a confession;<sup>43</sup> the Mennonites' loyalty to the Russian state;<sup>44</sup> their service to that state; the privileges they enjoyed under the Russian government, especially their exemption from military service; and the origin of their religion, among other matters.

Braun appears to confirm the above interpretation in his last, posthumously published, essay entitled: "Archive Destroyed by Bolsheviks." There he wrote:

The German colonists generally and the Mennonites in particular encountered all kinds of difficulties during World War I. Shortly after the outbreak of the war an irrational hate campaign was directed against all things German in the Russian press, in which virtually all newspapers participated.<sup>45</sup> It was directed especially against the Germans who were designated "internal enemies" and "traitors" without a shred of evidence. They were accused of having remained Germans in spite of their 100 year residence in Russia; that they had retained ties to Germany; that they were even subsidized from there (where else could their legendary wealth come from?); that portraits of Bismarck and [Kaiser] Wilhelm II could be found hanging in every home; that Germany had, for political reasons and in accordance with a specific plan, established these colonies, etc.

Corrections, responses or protests against such slander were not accepted by the Russian newspapers. And by this time there was no longer a German press, for they had all been closed down; one was no longer allowed to print anything in German, not even a calling card. *Nevertheless, these degrading (vulgar) as well as dangerous accusations had to be refuted* [my emphasis]. Close upon the heels of these accusations came the liquidation laws directed against German landowners. Various questionnaires arrived from the government agencies that had to be answered, memoranda written, etc.<sup>46</sup>

Though left somewhat vague, the sequence of events Braun establishes in the above quotation would appear to confirm the fact that *Kto takie Mennonity* was indeed intended as a refutation of the charges raised against the Mennonites, to be a response to the vilification of Mennonites in the Russian press. Only a few newspapers, Braun argues, did not participate in it. And only then . . . were the liquidation laws passed.

It is not clear that Braun's booklet was ever submitted directly to the Russian government or to the Duma representatives in an attempt to persuade the authorities that the anti-German liquidation laws ought not to apply to Mennonites, though this is implied on occasion. Indeed, when it came to an official submission to the Council of Ministers, a number of other documents – in particular a document (at least according to B. H. Unruh) drawn up by a Russian lawyer whom Unruh identified only as "T" – were submitted, the last sometime in 1916/17, well after the second of the two laws had been passed in December of 1915, but before a third and much more onerous liquidation law was passed on 6 February, 1917.<sup>47</sup> Unruh refers to this document on numerous occasions because he considered at least a part of its wording to be extreme. He first mentioned it in an essay of 28 October, 1936 in *Der Bote* entitled: "Practical Questions." There Unruh wrote:

We must here, publicly and for the first time, present the unvarnished truth about what was attempted [on our behalf] in St. Petersburg with regard to the land liquidation laws in 1916/1917. For very obvious reasons, however, I cannot name names because, as far as I know, many persons who participated in those negotiations still live in the Soviet Union; and there are other reasons. Naturally, I will also attempt to be as objective as possible.<sup>48</sup>

At this point this was all he would say on the matter. He mentioned the issue again in a 10 February, 1937 article in *Der Bote* entitled "On Behalf of the German Cause." Once again, this time speaking of peace among different peoples, he said only:

. . . Perhaps the most recent attempts to reconcile Western Europe on the basis of the nations' "völkisch" relationships may be fruitful. We want to do our part to further this cause. But this cannot be done on the basis of a denial of our honorable *Deutschtum*. That [1916/1917] submission to the Tsar was certainly a signal we may no longer ignore.<sup>49</sup>

Finally, in the tenth essay written under the heading of "Practical Considerations" in *Der Bote* of 17 November, 1937, Unruh acknowledged what had bothered him so much about that alleged Mennonite submission to the Tsarist government, but only after he had attempted to clear his name of the charge of "Nazi" sympathy made by his critics.<sup>50</sup> The passage merits a full citation here.

Already beginning with the battles for our intellectual and national self-determination it began to dawn in many places in the Mennonite consciousness that we were considered a kind of alien body in the Russian state. This misgiving became a certainty when, during the war, the government adopted measures against us in the land liquidation laws as though we were citizens of an enemy state; it did that at a moment in time when the sons of German colonists, as well as our own, were serving the fatherland faithfully and sacrificially.

"The majority of the people," I explained explicitly before my Dutch audience, "did not recognize the deeper, or deepest, reasons for this opposition to us but explained everything as war psychosis and hatred of Germans. We also allowed ourselves to be led astray by the fact that the liquidation laws, at least on the face of it, targeted the descendants of those coming from Germany; in reality, however, they targeted a particular economic group."<sup>51</sup>

"The question: why did we migrate from Germany to Russia? acquired strongly political overtones in the struggle for survival. [But] politics easily destroys character. And in the subsequent discussion of this matter our character has not remained undamaged. In spite of warning voices, that question was answered from a one-sided and politically motivated point of view, and at the expense of historical truth. Since I do not wish to color my report in any fashion whatsoever that has to be established."

That is how I spoke many years ago before a Dutch audience, and that is how I speak today. I made clear that, literally speaking, the liquidation laws were directed against Germans; in reality, however, they were directed against racially alien farmers in order to divert the Russian peasant from his demand for land from the estates of Russian nobles, etc. The shrill appeal to nationalist sentiment was simply a demagogic device to camouflage the true motives. But this appeal thoroughly frightened our people, more than it ought to have, and made them view their Prussian origin "in a partially unhistorical perspective."<sup>52</sup>

Shedding more light on this aspect, the presentation then established that, in general, the introspection of our settlers during the liquidation period "was not profound enough." "The expropriation laws operated with the concept of the origin of those Russian citizens whom they wished to transform into slaves [Heloten]. Our congregations were therefore completely justified in reminding themselves as well as the Russian government of the origin of a large portion of our people from the Netherlands. It was right and proper that we turned back the pages of our history and confronted the malevolent bureaucrats with the half-forgotten tradition [that we had come] from Frisia and Holland. But it did not remain with this [argument]. For utilitarian reasons one exaggerated in the matter of origins, [especially] in a document submitted to the Tsar in 1917."

Here, too, the presentation explained the essential matters. I have intentionally retained everything word for word that was presented at the time. No name was given to the Dutch fellow believers, but also no substantive issue withheld. "That memorandum – we wrote at the time – contained such monstrous sentences as: 'Not a drop of German blood flows in our veins;' and it ended with the sentence: 'We repudiate everything Germanic.'<sup>53</sup> Such a false treatment of the question of our national origin is both unhistorical and beneath contempt. Racially speaking we represent a mixture. It was the destiny of the Anabaptists to be on the move. Persecution drove the various groups from place to place . . ." Even then I spoke of the "niederländisch-niederdeutsche" culture as constituting our intellectual heritage. The audience was fully informed. I closed this part of my presentation with the words: "You



will recognize from this event, that in Russia, both as a church and a cultural group, we were also drawn into political-economic affairs, and that in these difficult struggles we also experienced painful derailments – a proof of the fact that we, while defending ourselves, at times proceeded without adequate introspection and thought.”

The foregoing would appear to confirm that Braun’s booklet must be seen in a larger context than simply that of the liquidation laws, as those laws have themselves to be seen in the context not only of the increasingly shrill Russian national sentiment, but also, as Unruh points out, in the context of the land hunger of the Russian peasants and the disastrous defeats experienced by the Russian forces on the German front in the early months of World War I. Though it was therefore not a direct response to Bondar’s book, Braun’s booklet was a response to the issues raised by right wing Russian nationalists long before land liquidation became a threat, issues that were clearly enunciated in Bondar’s 1916 book. What might have been ignored before the war, however, could not be ignored during Russia’s war with Germany, which added the cry of ‘traitor’ to Russia’s German inhabitants.<sup>54</sup>

In light of the above it is interesting to note that Heinrich J. Braun, Peter’s older brother, was not only a large landowner but, as he himself informed his German audience in a speech entitled: “The School System of our German-Evangelical Racial Brothers in South Russia,” “I myself was the plenipotentiary for the large land owners of the Melitopol District until the fall of the provisional government and know what happened.”<sup>55</sup> Neither Braun himself, nor the document listed in note 55, tells us precisely when this election took place. We do know from a letter of Abraham Kroeker (one of the editors of the *Friedensstimme*) to the *Mennonitische Rundschau* of 11 July, 1917 that,

... In the summer of 1915 our brother, H. J. Braun, was condemned to be exiled to the Jeniseisk Gouvernement, ostensibly because of Baptist propaganda.<sup>56</sup> He got wind of this in time and avoided his fate through escape. Until now he has been in hiding, living most of the time in Petrograd . . . .

H. J. Braun is now free and will hopefully return home in the next few days . . . .<sup>57</sup>

In his *Lebenslauf*, Braun gives the date when he was forced to flee Halbstadt as 15 June, and the length of his absence as 22 months. That would mean that he returned to the Molotschna sometime in April/May 1917. All of this is confirmed, in greater detail, by Karl Lindemann in his 1924 book, *Von den deutschen Kolonisten in Russland. Ergebnisse einer Studienreise, 1919-1921* (Concerning the German Colonists in Russia. Results of a Study Trip 1919-1921).<sup>58</sup> There Lindemann wrote:

Mennonite preachers were persecuted in a similar manner by the Tsarist government. A number of them were taken into custody in 1915 in the Molotschna colony (Berdiansk District). One of these preachers – a friend of mine – H. D. Braun [it should be H. J. Braun] was fortunate enough to escape to Moscow where he was provided with letters of recommendation to a number of important members of the St. Petersburg government. The honorable prince, Vladimir Mich. Volkonsky, at the time assistant to the Minister of Internal Affairs and earlier Vice-President of the Imperial Duma, gave him a friendly reception and advised him to stay in St. Petersburg where he could protect himself until matters had settled down somewhat. At the same time, the prince demanded, of the Governor General of Odessa, General Ebeloff, to know precisely what crime preacher H. Braun had committed. Characteristically, no answer was ever given because no crime had ever been committed. As a consequence, preacher H. Braun lived undisturbed in St. Petersburg until he returned to his home in Halbstadt in 1917.<sup>59</sup>

No doubt, therefore, H. J. Braun was in St. Petersburg during the time the submissions regarding the impending implementation of the land liquidation laws were made to the Imperial Tsarist government, and as the official representative of the Melitopol Mennonite land owners, he himself was commissioned to make representations to the government on their behalf. Now it is quite likely that as represented by his brother Peter's document, he may have supported a more radical formulation of the theory of the Dutch origin of the Russian Mennonites than historical accuracy allowed. One could infer this from statements he is alleged to have made at the 1917 congress of German and Mennonite colonists in Russia called together in Moscow by none other than Karl Lindemann shortly after the March 1917 Revolution. B. H. Unruh described what took place at the congress in a letter to B. B. Janz of 14 May, 1922.

Immediately after the March Revolution," he wrote, "at the instigation of Prof. Lindemann a congress of all Germans in Russia took place. Johann Willms and I were sent as delegates of the Halbstadt Volost. Representatives from the Old Colony were also present. On the agenda was the creation of an alliance of all colonists. Its purpose was the preservation of colonial culture. As well, representatives were to be elected into the national assembly. The Mennonites had much at stake in all this, especially to win support in the assembly for a renewed privilege regarding non-combatant service. From this perspective alone it was essential to enter into close cooperation with the rest of the colonists. It was unthinkable that the Mennonite minority, scattered across the various governments, should have, by themselves, been able to elect a representative. In one fashion or another they would have had to make common cause with one or another political party. The K. B. (party), already at the congress, sought energetically to win the support of the colonists. But it was proper that this cooperation was rejected. It would have burdened us far too much during a period of great turmoil. Instead, we chose to work with the Lutherans and the Catholics. It would have been both unwise and unnatural to have sought out other allies.

An important question was therefore what form this cooperation with the colonists was to take. One of the representatives (delegates) from the Volga colonies laid a proposal before the congress for just such an alliance. In it, the colonists were described as "Russian citizens of German descent." Thereupon H. Braun, who had appeared at the congress as a guest, rose and declared: "The Mennonites cannot sign such a document; they are Hollanders." His statement had the effect of a bomb. People became extremely agitated. At that point I delivered a speech to which I am as fully committed today as I was then. I defended three points that I wish to explain more fully:

a) The majority of Russian Mennonites came out of the Netherlands. (One should not say out of "Holland." The term Holland in no way covers the geographical territory from which the Mennonites came. It is high time, in any case, to begin to clarify the question of the origin of the Russian Mennonites on a purely scholarly basis.)

b) For 200 years the Mennonites were under the influence of German culture and have become Germanic; this last word is to be interpreted culturally, not politically.

c) Mennonites must cooperate with the rest of the colonists. Nevertheless, they unconditionally assert their autonomy. Under no circumstances will they sacrifice the latter. Rather than do so they would remain alone.<sup>60</sup>

Enough has been said here to establish, not only Peter J. Braun's authorship of *Kto takie Mennonity*, but also the involvement – most likely from the very outset – of his older, very influential, brother Heinrich. It is time, therefore, to turn our attention to the historical awakening among the Russian Mennonites that made Braun and Epp's documents possible.



# No Longer a Child

*Not to know what happened before one was born is to remain a child.*

— Cicero, *De Oratore*

*The craving for an interpretation of history is so deep-rooted that, unless we have a constructive outlook over the past, we are drawn either to mysticism or to cynicism.*

— F. Powicke, *Modern Historians and the Study of History*

On the eve of the publication of Peter Martin Friesen's massive *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia (1789-1910)*,<sup>1</sup> David H. Epp observed that his people had, "in the last six to seven years, experienced an educational explosion unparalleled in the past one hundred years." Consequently, Epp boasted, there was now hardly a branch of learning in which Mennonites in Russia could not call on one of their own.<sup>2</sup> This was as true of the historical profession as any other. Little wonder, then, that the presence of professionally trained historians should, during these years, lead to an extended inner-Mennonite discussion regarding the nature and importance of the discipline, how it was to be taught in the schools, and the relevance of Mennonite history to the development of Mennonites in Russia and their self-consciousness as a people. Totally absent from the discussion, however, was any mention of the kind of history Russian Mennonites were in fact to practice on a fairly large scale during the years 1908 to 1917: a kind of "public history"<sup>3</sup> employed to defend the rights and privileges granted them upon their entry to the country but which the government was now attempting to undermine. Utilized sporadically by their ancestors already in the age of the Reformation to defend basic human rights (such as the freedom from religious persecution<sup>4</sup>) or more recently by their Prussian co-religionists in the defense of their military exemption,<sup>5</sup> such Anabaptist/Mennonite attempts to influence governmental policy in their favor through historical studies had, in the past, nearly invariably met with failure. The attempts had nevertheless to be made, for they were prompted more often than not by dire necessity, sometimes even by desperation. Yet P. M. Friesen's history, aside from its influence on the work of Peter J. Braun, had little impact on either the academic discussion of the discipline or its application to the practical problems Mennonites were beginning to encounter in Russian society at the turn of the century.

The philosophical discussion regarding the nature of the discipline began with Benjamin Unruh's review of Epp's 1909 Johann Cornies biography; the debate about the teaching of Mennonite history in the Russian Mennonite school system followed in 1911 with Epp's call to teach Mennonite history in the elementary schools. Both Epp's scholarship as well as his 1911 call grew out of his experiences as an elementary school teacher; for it was in that capacity that he had, over the years, become dismayed by the pervasive historical ignorance of his students, an ignorance that extended even to their own past and was encouraged by a nearly universal indifference to history in the Russian Mennonite public.

In an attempt to stimulate interest in history among his fellow Mennonites, Epp had, already long before his 1911 call, begun recounting aspects of their past. Marking important milestones in Russian Mennonite history as he did so, Epp became – until the appearance of Friesen's *magnum opus* – his people's foremost historian. One year after the long-delayed publication of Peter Hildebrand's 1836 manuscript, *The First Emigration from the Danzig Region to South Russia*,<sup>6</sup> Epp launched his historical career in 1889 with a celebratory chronicle about the founding of the "Old Colony."<sup>7</sup> Together, the two books provided Russian Mennonites with valuable insider accounts of the Mennonites' first settlement in New Russia. In 1909, Epp turned his hand to biography, celebrating the life of Johann Cornies, perhaps the most famous of Russian Mennonites. Though he wrote in praise of Cornies, his primary purpose was to incite his fellow believers – who, to his mind, had become complacent, even selfish over the years – to emulate the great Mennonite innovator.<sup>8</sup> A year later, he published a slender volume commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Memrik Mennonite settlement.<sup>9</sup> But like many another Mennonite historian before and after, Epp was gradually forced to conclude that his efforts on behalf of the Mennonite past had done little to alleviate the historical ignorance that so appalled him in his fellow believers. In the hope of changing matters he therefore recommended the teaching of Mennonite history beginning in the elementary schools.

Only after Epp had left Chortitza for Ekaterinoslav in 1899 did the interest in Mennonite history he had sought to nourish in the Old Colony begin to flourish. Even David Rempel was influenced by it.<sup>10</sup> Arnold Dyck, another Chortitza Central School student, immortalized this interest in the name he gave his later Canadian publishing firm (the *Echo Verlag*) in which he published his well-known historical series.<sup>11</sup>

What drew Epp (as well as Peter Braun somewhat later) to the study and writing of history were collections of historical documents. In

Epp's case it was the materials rescued from an uncaring people by Peter Hildebrand and his heirs in the Old Colony; in Braun's case, it was the documents collected over a twenty-five year period by P. M. Friesen. Both Epp and Braun would later give notable addresses at the 1917 Neuhalbstadt General Conference on the imperative to collect, in a central archive, all documents relating to the Mennonite experience in Russia. Of the two, Braun's address appears to have had the greater impact for it led to his being selected as the conference's first archivist, an assignment he tackled with an enthusiasm born out of a profound conviction. Not only did he facilitate the collection of materials wherever he could, he also began to mine them in his 1920 manuscript, *The Molotschna Mennonite School Board 1869-1919*. This manuscript, long believed lost, has just recently been published in Germany.<sup>12</sup>

Whereas Braun's historical consciousness appears to have been stimulated by the growing interest in Russian Mennonite history that surrounded him, it was Friesen's study that transformed his interest into a passion. His 1912 review of the latter's *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia* makes the case and therefore merits a closer look. In some important ways it also points forward to his 1914 *Kto takie Mennonity*.

Braun began his review by drawing attention to some central aspects of the historian's craft. He argued, for example, that the historian must have integrity, being fair and impartial at all times; he must never be biased or write in a tendentious manner. The search for the unvarnished truth must ever be his goal.<sup>13</sup> Braun never deviated from these convictions. In the introduction to his *Molotschna Mennonite School Board*,<sup>14</sup> he wrote:

The author has attempted to assimilate the documentary material at his disposal in a conscientious manner and to evaluate the persons involved and their work in an objective and non-partisan manner.<sup>15</sup>

And in a letter of 3 August, 1928 to Jacob H. Janzen in which he described his work on the *School Board*, he wrote, contrasting his kind of research with the literary, impressionistic historical pieces his friend was turning out:

It is not the kind of book you would write, the kind that derives from your inner self.<sup>16</sup> I can't do that. It is [rather] a study based on the historical sources, *an archival study* [my emphasis], as is suitable for a person of my inclination. I have not only paged through, but read whole bookcases full of documents, letters, etc., often literally spending days looking for a single footnote.<sup>17</sup>

Braun was still fully committed to these principles of historical scholarship as late as November, 1932 when, already completely bedridden, he responded to his younger brother's request for a critique of the latter's

"The Church Divisions . . . ." destined for Christian Neff's *Festschrift*. There Braun wrote:

You have sought out a most problematic topic for yourself, for it is extremely difficult to portray such complex phenomena in a just and objective manner where every possible influence, viewpoint, emotion, and circumstance pertaining at the time plays a role. P. M. Friesen is honestly concerned to judge in an objective manner, but on occasion the "brother" nevertheless surfaces. Your presentation, on the other hand, tends at times (not always!) too much to the "Churchly" side. If a study is to be "scholarly" [*wissenschaftlich*], it must not manifest any tendency, any bias, that is, any personal predilections of the author must not determine the selection of the evidence or the manner in which it is presented; rather, it is incumbent upon him to investigate and evaluate the historical material, then separate the essential from the non-essential features in as objective a manner as possible. In order to give you an overview of the whole, I will organize my remarks under the following headings.<sup>18</sup>

Other aspects of the review should be noted as well. First, in a footnote to his review, Braun called for the creation of a "museum or archive" among Russian Mennonites to house Friesen's collection of documents. He was to reiterate such a call much more forcefully later on because of his experiences during the war. A second aspect, seemingly incidental in the review, was to become a major interpretive theme in his *Kto takie Mennonity*: it had to do with P. M. Friesen's "very brief" discussion of the "origin of the 'Taufgesinnte.'" For those desiring a fuller account than the one given by Friesen, Braun suggested reading C. H. Wedel's *Brief History of the Mennonites* written in four slender volumes between 1900 and 1904, especially volumes one and two. This author suggested many years ago that P. M. Friesen's thesis regarding the origins of sixteenth-century Anabaptism, not only as reflected in the title of his book, was vintage Ludwig Keller even though he never mentioned him.<sup>19</sup> Wedel, on the other hand, stated in the introduction to volume two dealing with the sixteenth century:

. . . Incidentally, we should like to say that this "sketch" presupposes a rudimentary understanding [of Anabaptist origins], such as can be gleaned from our "Sketches from Church History." The present study wishes especially to encourage the acquisition, by the reader, of a deeper understanding in this area. In this regard we are fortunate, with respect to the period of history dealing with our forefathers discussed in the present volume, to be able to point to a rich literature. *Above all*, we would like to recommend the meritorious works of Dr. Keller. Entire paragraphs of this volume are merely condensations of his arguments. Aside from his works . . . .<sup>20</sup>

Braun's observations make it clear that he considered Ludwig Keller's interpretation to be the link connecting Friesen's interpretation of



Anabaptism to that of Wedel. It was an interpretation that, as we shall see in the next chapter, David H. Epp introduced to the Russian Mennonites.

A third aspect of Braun's review dealt with the Mennonite attitude toward history in general. In this regard he wrote:

The knowledge of history in general, or that of their own past in particular, is always of incalculable importance for a people,<sup>21</sup> for "history is a good teacher."<sup>22</sup> That is why God already repeatedly ordered the Israelites of the old covenant to make known to their children and children's children the signs and wonders He had performed on their behalf. We Mennonites have, I am sorry to say, distinguished ourselves since time immemorial through an unforgivable disregard of our own history, the deplorable consequence of which is that we are absolutely ignorant of it. That is why we believe many things to be innovations which are, in reality, only Old-Evangelical Taufgesinnte practices, such as edification and "discussion-hours," instruction of children (or "Sunday school"), immersion baptism, and the like. That is why we constantly repeat the sins and errors of our fathers, paying a higher tuition fee every time we do so. We have [as a consequence] acquired an unhistorical approach to things over the years, one that never reaches beyond our memories or experiences; and whenever or wherever a new – or at least for us seemingly new – movement arises, we either immediately praise it to the heavens or condemn it to the depths of hell instead of trying to understand or explain it from within its historical-genetic context. We seem to be incapable of doing the latter.<sup>23</sup>

As already noted, this passage clearly harkens back to Benjamin H. Unruh's review of David H. Epp's Cornies biography published in the 17 November, 1909 *Der Botschafter*. Since that review also appears to have marked the beginning of an important philosophical discussion about history in general, and the teaching of Mennonite history among Russian Mennonites in particular, it is important to return to it in order to set Braun's development, and that of his fellow Russian Mennonites interested in history, in context.<sup>24</sup>

A broad ranging discussion of history in general and Mennonite history in particular within the Russian Mennonite colonies would have been nearly unthinkable prior to the 1905 October Manifesto, both because of the government's strict censorship laws<sup>25</sup> and the absence of suitable public forums in which to communicate ideas. For it was the Manifesto, by proclaiming the principle of the freedom of the press, that made possible the establishment of the latter in the form of the two major Russian Mennonite periodicals: the *Friedensstimme*, which moved to Halbstadt, Molotschna, in 1906 after having been printed in Berlin since 1903; and *Der Botschafter*, first published in Berdiansk in 1905 after several earlier attempts to gain governmental approval had failed.<sup>26</sup> But public forums without competent participants to carry on an intelligent discussion would, of themselves, have done little good.

By 1905, however, the educational explosion Epp referred to was beginning to provide such participants. They came from the ranks of teachers who had studied in universities at home and abroad, many returning with advanced degrees. They were increasingly to be found in the Central, Girls' and Commerce schools, as well as in the pedagogical classes attached to the Central Schools in a number of colonies.<sup>27</sup> Largely unsupervised and without much guidance from their home communities while abroad, nearly all of them had returned to their home communities after having completed their studies. Halbstadt and its environs boasted an especially large contingent of such well-educated young teachers<sup>28</sup> that met as a group once a week for wide-ranging intellectual discussions. At the same time, Molotschna boasted a better relationship between MBs and Old Church Mennonites than elsewhere<sup>29</sup> and provided a more congenial atmosphere in which ideas could be openly and intelligently discussed. The return from Switzerland and Germany respectively of Benjamin H. Unruh in 1907<sup>30</sup> and Theodor Ediger in 1910, however, was critical to the discussion regarding history since they were to become the prime movers in the debate.<sup>31</sup> The first held a Licentiate in theology from the University of Basel, the other a Ph.D. in history from the University of Leipzig.

No sooner had Unruh received his appointment at the Halbstadt Girls' School in 1909 than his review of Epp's *Johann Cornies* appeared in the pages of *Der Botschafter*. It was this review that initiated the discussion on history in general and Mennonite history in particular, a discussion that was to continue to the very eve of the war.

As already noted, David H. Epp's book on Cornies was not his first.<sup>32</sup> In 1889 he had written his *The Cortitza Mennonites*, commemorating the centennial of the Prussian Mennonite migration to the Ukraine. In Odessa eight years later, in 1897, he published his *Brief Explanation and Elucidation of the "Catechism of the Christian Taufgesinnte Congregations called Mennonites."*<sup>33</sup> The first has received considerable attention; not so the second. In some respects, however – especially in terms of the larger Russian Mennonite historical self-understanding – the second is immeasurably more important than the first, for in its concluding section it contains a "Brief Synopsis of the Origins and Development of our Mennonite Congregations."<sup>34</sup> Nearly exclusively dependent upon Ludwig Keller's interpretation of Anabaptist/Mennonite history, this synopsis is the first historical treatise of any kind to introduce Keller and his interpretation of Anabaptism to the Russian Mennonites.<sup>35</sup> As such, it would later confirm the interpretation Peter Braun encountered in the pages of Friesen's and Wedel's histories.

None of Epp's earlier studies had created much of a stir in Russian Mennonite circles. And it is probably safe to say that his biography of

Johann Cornies would not have done so either had it not been reviewed, in a public forum, by one of the brightest and best educated young minds among Russian Mennonites at the time. Even at that, it was not what Unruh said about the book that caught on; it was not Epp's reputation as an historian that was at stake. Epp's book was merely Unruh's foil, the excuse to discourse at some length about Russian Mennonites, history and religion. In that review Benjamin H. Unruh wrote:

Anyone who has ever reflected on the peculiarities of the Mennonites must have been struck by the absence of a sense of history as characteristic of their mentality . . . No religious group has as little historical orientation, none has as little concern for the past of its own church as the Mennonite people. This fact is intimately connected to their religious beliefs. The Mennonite is relatively indifferent to his past (unlike the Catholic, for example) because he does not see himself as a member of a larger community; rather, [he sees himself] as an individual, as a person who is responsible only to God and to himself. Like all Protestants, the Mennonite is an individualist, just in an even stronger sense. Neither congregation, nor priest, nor ancestors represent him before God; he deals with God directly. Strictly speaking, the Mennonite has no religious authority, no sacred tradition that is universally or even necessarily binding. His only authority is Christ and His Gospel. And I believe it is precisely this religious individualism that forms the backdrop to the Mennonite indifference to history. From this religious individualism also proceeds the democratic Mennonite congregationalism with its autonomy of the local congregation and its [God-given] right to individual decision-making. This personal, individualistic impulse dramatically loosens the Mennonite from any ties to his past.<sup>36</sup>

Although Unruh was not the first to point to the Mennonite disregard, perhaps even sovereign disdain, for history (especially Mennonite history), his was a powerful voice. Alexander Klaus, the outsider, had already observed that Russian Mennonites hardly knew who Menno was.<sup>37</sup> Others were to reiterate the charge. As late as 1924 Christian Neff complained that even Germany had hardly produced any Mennonite historians.<sup>38</sup> But Unruh, the newly minted intellectual, proceeded from complaint to consequence. He continued:

On the one hand, this unhistorical mode of thought has kept us from a slavish dependence upon men and traditions. On the other, however, it has been the occasion of grave sins, sins of expediency. Lepsius once wrote: 'To think unhistorically is . . . to think in a godless fashion.' The unhistorical person will always be ungrateful: he forgets all the benefits that have come his way, of which he is [merely] the heir. Anyone who thinks unhistorically remains unwise (foolish): for history is the most important teacher since it has the ability to prevent us from taking wrong turns and getting lost on byways. Anyone who does not think historically becomes proud: the seeds sown, watered and nurtured by others he ascribes to himself and his own activity. For all of these

reasons we must begin to study history, the history of others but above all our own; [we must do this] in order to become thankful to God for what He has given us in our forefathers, in order to become wise in our battle against the forces on our right as well as on our left, and in order to remain faithful and courageous in the struggle to discover new solutions to old as well as to emerging problems.<sup>39</sup>

Unruh's review of Epp's *Cornies* was nearly immediately followed by Jacob Ewert's review of Christine Hege's *Short History of the Mennonites*. Ewert, a former student of the Russian Mennonite school system, also, though less eloquently, bemoaned the Mennonite indifference to history in general and utter ignorance of Anabaptist/Mennonite history in particular, charging that "miserably little" of their own history was taught in the Russian Mennonite schools. He asserted that religious personalities like Luther, Zwingli and Calvin – in contrast to Menno – were treated as life and blood figures, even as heroes of the faith. When it came to Menno, however,

... our preceptor's knowledge had apparently reached its limit. He gave us only a brief sketch of Menno's life and work, and that in the most colorless of tones. Such sessions weighed like lead upon our consciousness, for they implied that our teacher was ashamed to say too much about the Anabaptist leader. He obviously lacked the necessary perspective on, or understanding of, Menno and his work.

The church history they read therefore told them a great deal about the heroes of other peoples' faith, Ewert asserted, but virtually nothing about their own. Indeed, neither at school nor at home had he ever, as a youngster, heard the name of Menno mentioned. This was beginning to change, however, for in the last years a hunger for knowledge had begun to manifest itself among young and old alike, a hunger especially for an understanding of Mennonite history. The Union of Mennonite Churches in the German Reich had been forced to face the same issue, he continued. To alleviate the situation it had proclaimed a public competition for the writing of a comprehensive Mennonite history, offering a prize for the best entry. If such a device could be used in Germany to produce Christine Hege's fine study, Ewert argued, it might accomplish the same thing among the Russian Mennonites.<sup>40</sup>

To ameliorate the manifest general Mennonite ignorance about their founder, *Der Botschafter*, beginning on 23 October, 1909, ran a lengthy essay (in three installments) on Menno. Though written by Johann Klassen, a Central School teacher from Ekaterinoslav, the piece was clearly a thinly-veiled borrowing from H. G. Mannhardt's 1892 commemorative tribute to Menno,<sup>41</sup> though Mannhardt was given no credit nor was his name so much as mentioned. In light of the fact that

Klassen was a Central School teacher, one wonders how to interpret David H. Epp's editorial comment:

... Our Central School students are offered only a very weak portrayal of Menno, one that soon fades from memory. But even our teachers and preachers very often have no clear understanding of Menno's position, or importance, in the history of the Reformation.<sup>42</sup>

Little was done to improve matters until the meeting of the General Conference of August, 1911 in Berdiansk, however.

One could write the occasional essay on Menno, cribbed though it was from the work of others. One could write the occasional book on Russian Mennonite history as David H. Epp had begun to do. But all this left the schools unaffected because there were no instructional texts available. The conference meeting in Berdiansk therefore moved to lay the foundation for the teaching of Mennonite history in the Russian Mennonite schools by addressing precisely this issue. No less a person than David H. Epp initiated the discussion at the conference by presenting a paper in which he declared:

... The ignorance with respect to Mennonite history among the students in our Mennonite elementary schools is great; the most basic and foundational concepts, the most important events are unknown to them. As a consequence, there is profound indifference – even among more mature persons – to all aspects of Mennonite life. It is for this reason that the preparation and publication of a brief (at the most some 32 pages in length) primer on Mennonite history by a special commission elected exclusively for this purpose is a dire necessity.<sup>43</sup>

A number of delegates, however, argued that such a matter should be decided by the schools; they therefore insisted upon a prior consultation with the teacher organizations. As a result, the Berdiansk conference declined to elect a commission, never mind recommend the writing of a history primer.<sup>44</sup>

The powerful Molotschna Mennonite Teachers' Society discussed the matter at its meeting on 4 January, 1912. It heard two separate reports on the subject and witnessed a lively follow-up discussion. But the society's ultimate decision was to oppose the teaching of Mennonite history as a separate subject in the elementary schools. It did so, as it stated, because students in these schools were too immature, too underdeveloped, and lacked the historical background needed to understand and appreciate Mennonite history. Furthermore, there were just too many other things elementary schools needed to be doing. And lastly, Mennonite history just contained too many difficulties; difficulties elementary school teachers were at best ill-prepared to tackle.<sup>45</sup> If the powerful

Molotschna Mennonite Teachers' Association opposed the Mennonite history initiative in the elementary schools, who could be for it?

It was at this point that Theodor Ediger, having just received the Ph.D. in history from the University of Leipzig in 1908,<sup>46</sup> entered the discussion. In an essay published in *Der Botschafter* on 27 April, 1912, he addressed both Epp's and the Association's concerns. Ediger was not opposed to teaching Mennonite history within the larger context of Church History, but as a secular historian he wished to add political and cultural dimensions to it. He also suggested that an appendix be attached to the primer containing a description of the church's organization and a list of the Mennonites' rights and privileges in the empire. He conceded that all of this could not be accomplished within the scope of a thirty-two page primer. A more comprehensive treatment of Mennonite history was necessary, especially if the subject was to be introduced in the Central and Girls' schools as a separate discipline. Ediger knew, of course, that Mennonite history was being taught in the latter schools. But, he argued, the Church History text being used allotted only some seven pages to the Mennonite story and its interpretation was so flawed "that students could get nothing out of it."<sup>47</sup> Ediger therefore proposed that a substantial primer in Mennonite history be prepared for the higher schools from which elementary school teachers could then take what they needed for their purposes. The primer itself should focus on the Russian Mennonite story and be chronological in composition. Arguments against the teaching of Mennonite history in the Russian Mennonite schools Ediger dismissed out of hand.<sup>48</sup>

Although Epp had been the instigator of the history initiative, he was opposed to teaching Mennonite history in the elementary schools as a separate subject of instruction. He made this eminently clear at the October, 1912 Nikolaipol General Conference. He wished rather to have it taught as a subdivision within the larger context of instruction in religion.<sup>49</sup> Ediger, however, who had already rejected such an approach in his 27 April, 1912 article, proceeded to ignore it completely in his presentation to the Nikolaipol conference. In a paper entitled: "Instruction in Mennonite History: Part I, The Necessity of Instruction in History,"<sup>50</sup> he instead proceeded to address the more fundamental question: "What is to be achieved through instruction in history?" He gave the following answer:

[Instruction in history] seeks to lift the individual out of his isolation and situate him in the context of the great temporal and social movements of his time; to demonstrate to him that every historical phenomenon has its roots in the nebulous and distant past; that every event that passes before our eyes has a cause and will have consequences. [Instruction in history] wishes to paint, before the eyes of the investigator, a picture of the spatial and chronological

sequential nature of the gradual evolution of events in which humans participate as social, rational, and psychological causative agents. It desires to help us realize, to demonstrate and make comprehensible to us the unfolding development of the human spirit of previous ages. It has the duty to make us aware that the worldview of the individual, which has been limited to the present and the narrow circle of one's immediate surroundings, must be expanded and the individual be informed of the fact that he has an obligation to fulfill his role in the world, not in isolation but as an active member of a greater whole. – In this manner instruction in history seeks to accomplish that: 1) the student arrives at the point where he begins to understand the connections that the present – and, indeed, the individual himself – has to the past, and to understand historical phenomena in their great historical continuities; and, 2) help the student understand that the individual, the community, a people, and the state are inextricably intertwined with one another. It is only by unraveling the past that the present can be completely understood.<sup>51</sup>

Only one year earlier David H. Epp had bemoaned the nearly universal Mennonite ignorance of, even antipathy towards, the study of history. Yet here the General Conference was confronted with a rather sophisticated, German academic understanding of history by one of its own who had left the village and become a member of the academy. Nothing could demonstrate more graphically the contrasts that were beginning to surface in Russian Mennonite society as the result of the educational explosion that had begun in their midst at the turn of the century.<sup>52</sup>

Having duly impressed his audience, Ediger proceeded to discuss the teaching of history in the elementary schools. He began with the importance of the teacher and his contribution; when such instruction should begin; what should be taught at the outset; how this might impact the teaching of history in the Central Schools; and what the educational goals should be. From history in general, Ediger turned to instruction in Mennonite history in particular.

Although Ediger also sought to apply his recommendations to the teaching of Mennonite history, he did argue that there was one respect in which the latter differed: Mennonites had no natural unity since they were spread throughout the world, the majority living on three separate continents. Even in Russia their settlement policy undermined their unity. Egotistical and material ambitions, Ediger insisted, were further decentralizing factors. And this disunity would only become more painfully obvious in the future. While familial ties still bound some of them together, these too would eventually fail. The only thing that could keep the world's Mennonites together, Ediger argued, was their common historical heritage. It was therefore absolutely essential to introduce a comprehensive study of Mennonite history to their schools.<sup>53</sup>

An extended discussion followed Ediger's presentation. It addressed practical rather than philosophical aspects of the problem, however. Nor did it take long before David Epp once more raised the issue of a primer in Mennonite history, this time recommending that a prize be offered for the best manuscript. Bishop Dirks suggested that C. H. Wedel's *Sketches from Church History* was already available for use. But Wedel's text was rejected as inappropriate, as too advanced, since instruction in the subject was to begin at the age of ten.<sup>54</sup> Toward the conclusion of the discussion, P. Hooge observed that many schools had already begun to teach Mennonite history; the rest, he hoped, would soon follow their example. Then, in good Mennonite fashion, he moved a resolution expressing the conference's pleasure at this happy development. Johann Klassen, not quite so pleased however, requested that the word "many" in the resolution be changed to "some" in order better to reflect the reality of the situation. The innocuous motion was then endorsed by H. J. Braun and Ediger himself.

The discussions on the conference floor accomplished little, perhaps because the participants were ill-prepared to deal with the problem in depth. When Benjamin H. Unruh, the "historian of church and dogma," entered the lists against Ediger in the pages of *Der Botschafter*, this began to change.<sup>55</sup> Already accompanied by a response from Ediger, Unruh opened his first salvo by conceding he had not been present at the Molotschna Teachers' Society meeting where the subject had been discussed. Nevertheless, he feared the society had rejected the history proposal because it had been "expressed too academically, creating the impression that the proponents wished to make elementary students into specialists in Mennonite history." Unruh conceded that instruction in Mennonite history had to begin in the elementary schools if an appreciation of, and love for the subject was to be instilled in the community. But teaching history as an academic discipline was not possible in such a setting. Therefore he opposed a thirty-two page primer, suggesting instead that children simply be told stories from Mennonite history in the elementary schools. To facilitate such an approach, he recommended the creation of a reader, a storybook, in Mennonite history for the elementary classes.

In his accompanying response Ediger rejected the notion that advocates wished to transform elementary students into experts in Mennonite history. But neither did he simply want stories – episodes – in Mennonite history told to the elementary students. He wanted the real thing taught with depth, perspective, and context. He accused Unruh of agreeing with the "friend of the schools," writing in No. 49 of the *Friedensstimme*, who had called instruction in history in the elementary schools "an impossibility" and dismissed it out of hand as



“absurd.” Both Unruh and the “friend” should have come to the conference at Nikolaipol, Ediger suggested, for the discussion there had made clear that “the teaching of Mennonite history in the elementary schools was not only possible but would be accompanied by the best of results.” In conclusion Ediger quoted, at considerable length, Unruh’s own increasingly famous statement regarding Mennonite ignorance of their history made in his review of Epp’s 1909 Cornies biography.<sup>56</sup>

The central issue that separated Unruh and Ediger was a methodological one: whether children in the elementary schools were mature enough to understand history without a certain level of real life experience. A number of correspondents agreed with Unruh that they were not. One, identifying himself only as “H.E.,” cited a number of pedagogical authorities in support. History as a discipline should only be taught to students in the Middle or Central schools, beginning about the fifth year at the earliest. Elementary schools students should only be told stories from history.<sup>57</sup>

Unruh himself responded in a subsequent article entitled: “Instruction in Mennonite History in the Village Schools Revisited.” In it he assured Ediger that he was in complete agreement with him concerning history as a discipline; as an advocate of its importance he would therefore not take a back seat to him. But the portion of his review of Epp’s *Cornies* thrown in his face by Ediger was irrelevant to the issue under discussion: There he had been talking about the importance of Mennonite history; here he was talking about methodology: when and how best to teach history in the Mennonite schools. He agreed that history should be taught in the elementary schools, but the question was *how* it was to be taught. In order to explain his approach, he laid bare his assumptions regarding human nature and its development.

My opinion,” he said, “is the following. In childhood a person is a ‘naïve realist.’ His interest lies in the manifold, multi-colored world of concrete appearances and events, less in the world of ideas. He is preeminently interested in observation, not in abstract thought. The expressed purpose of historical instruction, however, is to discover the central themes (ideas) of history, to elucidate, as fully and as comprehensively as possible, the causal connections of historical events. Pragmatic history is interested in the laws of history, in the universal more than the individual, in the origin and consequences of an event more than the event itself. The historian is like an art critic. In the same way that the latter evaluates a painting on the basis of its aesthetic qualities, even so the historian does with history. Determining the factual details of an event are, to be sure, important to the historian; but such an investigation is really only preparatory. His essential work – the more important, more satisfying work – begins when he seeks to, and indeed does, establish the inner connections of an historical event. Whereas the historian is an art critic, the child is simply an art lover. It absorbs, through its perception, unmediated what it sees and hears. To

be sure, even it begins to look for connections, but this desire is not paramount. Therefore the child will be captivated by the historical event, but will be heartily bored with the critical investigation of its causes. The child is simply not ready for a 'pragmatic approach' to history, neither ethical-religiously or socially. It is for these reasons that I advocate the episodic approach to teaching history [in the elementary schools], not history itself. In the Central Schools, however, the 'pragmatic approach' to history is already consciously to be employed both in the teaching of religious as well as profane history.<sup>58</sup>

Ediger rejected the episodic approach to teaching Mennonite or any other kind of history in the elementary schools in his response.<sup>59</sup> No true understanding of Mennonite history would be achieved if the teacher began with grandmother and grandfather, moved on to Johann Cornies, then to Menno, and so on. Unruh himself, Ediger contended, had stated that the instructional material should consist of "individual events in chronological sequence and in meaningful relationships to one another." That, Ediger contended, said it all. Wherever, he continued,

... such a relationship is established, the pragmatic connection becomes self-evident and will be easily recognizable, even by the child. It all depends on the method of presentation. Nothing would be more mistaken than to present the child with [historical] doctrines (or theories), the kind that are heard in seminars, in academic courses, or in auditoriums; the child must be able to establish the connections on the basis of the presentation of the facts. One cannot imagine a better exercise by means of which to develop the mind and sharpen the intellect. That, indeed, is the method recommended by Rein, Fries, Muench, Neumann and others. It is therefore the responsibility of the teacher to guide the student in such a manner that he, simply by listening to the presentation and reflecting upon the self-evident connections, may be led to understand the deeper, often hidden, inner connections in order to grasp the events as a sequence of causes and consequences.<sup>60</sup>

In a second address to the General Conference meeting in Rudnerweide on 15 August, 1913, Ediger moved from a more general discussion of the teaching of history in the Russian Mennonite schools to the more specific subject of teaching Mennonite history. Beginning with a summary of issues discussed thus far, Ediger contended that Mennonite history was unique because "political and church history were most intimately intertwined" in it.<sup>61</sup> He talked about organization of the material, emphasized quality over quantity, and addressed the matter of the child's interest.

Finally, Ediger turned to the question of how Mennonite history should be taught. He began by asserting that the teacher must begin his lesson with some contemporary event known and understood by the student, and only then go back in time to explain how it had come into being. Instruction in history, Ediger asserted,

... does not have as its prime purpose the imparting of historical facts, but must uncover cultural trends and pursue ethical goals. The most important and creative cultural and ethical concepts are to be dug out of the material, and the heroic figures of the past are to be presented as energetic actors and treated from an ethical perspective. Thus is the past to be transformed into the present.<sup>62</sup>

From the "how" of history, Ediger proceeded to the lecture, the presentation of the lesson. Here, boredom was to be avoided at all costs. Preparation was to be thorough; presentation was to be clear and enthusiastic, interspersed from time to time with graphic examples. Generalizations were to be avoided, and the main theme always apparent. Once more Ediger returned to the topic already thoroughly discussed in the pages of *Der Botschafter*: stories drawn from Mennonite history as opposed to a meaningful sequence of historical events. Reiterating his position, he asserted: "only that kind of historical instruction makes any sense in which the historical connections (or better, the connect-edness of historical events) become visible. Not episodes, but epochs!"<sup>63</sup>

In the presentation of the historical developments, Ediger continued, the teacher was to remain as objective as possible and avoid all tendentiousness. The conscientious teacher "will never view the material from this or that partisan political or confessional perspective, nor select his facts in such a manner as to determine the outcome," he asserted.<sup>64</sup> And although chronology was indispensable to an understanding of history, knowing the most important dates was enough to place all events in context. With that, Ediger had arrived at some specifics regarding Mennonite history and the question of the primer. He still did not believe the latter to be absolutely necessary. Yet, should the majority desire one, it should be the product of experience. The latter was hard to come by at the moment, however, since few teachers had as yet taught Mennonite history. It was therefore too early to expect a competent primer. In any case, Ediger concluded, a good teacher would want to collect his own materials.

Ediger then proceeded to list a number of books from which such materials might be taken: John Horsch's *History of the Mennonite Churches*; Anna Brons' *Origin, Development, and Fate of the Old-Evangelical Anabaptists*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed., 1912; C. H. Wedel's 4 vol. 1901 - 1904 *Sketch of Mennonite History*; Daniel Cassel's 1890 *History of the Mennonites*; P. M. Friesen's *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia*; Christine Hege's 1905 *Short History of the Mennonites*; and Max Schoen's 1886 *The West Prussian Mennonites*. With the exception of the last study, all more or less followed Keller's interpretation. Ediger also recommended using the *Mennonitisches Lexikon*, whose first volume had just come off the press. Edited by Christian Neff and Christian Hege,

most of its entries on Mennonite history were also molded in Keller's image.<sup>65</sup> The other studies he recommended dealt with the discipline of history. He concluded:

. . . Instruction in our history can only be useful and bring blessings if we all become convinced that as long as we remain ignorant of the past there will be no light posts in our future; we will not see any pathway into the future. Until such an historical awareness becomes universal in our midst, we will remain – at least temporarily – in a stagnant state, at a standstill, in ferment, in a battle between being and becoming. If we remain totally ignorant of our past, we will surely fall backward.<sup>66</sup>

Despite the fact that David H. Epp had, at an earlier conference, suggested that a primer in Mennonite history be written for the schools, Ediger addressed the matter only tangentially. Epp had even recommended, as we have already noted, that the conference offer a prize for the best manuscript.<sup>67</sup> However, since the conference had taken no official action on the matter, the project had been left in limbo. And that was precisely where it had remained. The Rudnerweide conference delegates therefore returned to the subject of a primer after they had discussed Ediger's paper, many obviously not convinced by the speaker's negative recommendation. Finally, Bishop Unruh moved that a prize be established for the writing of such a primer. H. J. Braun immediately proposed three prizes: one for 500, a second for 300, and a third for 200 rubles. The conference adopted Braun's proposal, suggesting that the prize monies be drawn from the treasury of the *KfK*.<sup>68</sup> On 20 September, 1913 the notice of such a prize appeared in *Der Botschafter*. It laid out, in considerable detail, the rules of the competition, the election of a prize committee at the next General Conference in 1914, and a deadline for the submitted manuscripts of 1 January, 1915.<sup>69</sup> Needless to say, the coming of World War I made holding a general conference in 1914 impossible; and by January, 1, 1915, Russian Mennonites had turned to writing a very different kind of Mennonite history.<sup>70</sup> A Russian Mennonite history primer, unlike B. H. Unruh's primer in religious instruction,<sup>71</sup> was never written.

In the meantime, another matter of considerable importance relating to history came up for consideration. In his 1912 review of P. M. Friesen's *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia*, Peter Braun had recommended the creation of a central Mennonite archive to house Friesen's collection of documents. Then, shortly after the Rudnerweide General Conference, in an article of 5 November, 1913 in *Der Botschafter* entitled "A New Center for the Cultivation of Mennonite History," David H. Epp informed his readers that the conference had mandated publishing the entire proceedings of all future general con-

ferences. The obligation to do so had been given to the *KfK*. As Chair of that commission, he had consequently begun to receive materials to that end, both copies and originals. In their pages were to be found letters, reports, and other interesting documents worthy of preservation. As editor of *Der Botschafter* people sent him other materials. All of these *Father Time* was gradually destroying. To house all the materials that he asked people to bring to the offices of *Der Botschafter*, Epp suggested the establishment of a central archive for all the Mennonites of Russia and another in each of the local churches. He even suggested establishing a special conference or church archive that would house all conference papers and those of its various agencies. As archivist, he recommended Minister G. Harder of Halbstadt because, as General Conference secretary, he was already in constant touch with the various churches. Epp concluded:

And so we wish to begin by looking through our cabinets and chests for old documents and papers. These we want to sort according to year and, during the long, quiet fall evenings, carefully read through them by lamplight seated next to the warm stove. Perhaps we will discover, in one or another of these writings, documents of historical importance.

In this fashion every one of us can contribute his building blocks [*Bausteine*] to the great edifice of Mennonite history.<sup>72</sup>

Even this project, however, never came to fruition – at least not at this point in time – due to the coming war.

As that war proceeded, the absence of a central Mennonite archive came increasingly to be regarded as a disaster. The minutes of the General Conference of Mennonites in Russia held in Neuhalbstadt from 6-8 June, 1917, that is after the fall of the Tsarist government but before the October, 1917 Communist Revolution, make this only too apparent. The minutes record that immediately after the opening ceremonies (perhaps indicating the importance of the issue) two papers were read: one by David H. Epp and the other by Peter Braun. The first dealt with the congregational life of the Russian Mennonites; the second, with the importance, indeed necessity, of a Mennonite archive. In the first, Epp dealt with such matters as the improvement of Mennonite church services, itinerant ministers, deacons, continuing education for students out of school, baptismal instruction, the women's vote, church chronicles, archives and a central Mennonite library. In the discussion that followed his presentation, church history, church music, and the training of ministerial candidates held center stage.

The report says nothing about the content of Braun's presentation. After a brief discussion of his paper, however, the conference passed a resolution that stated: "The Conference holds the establishment of a

Mennonite archive and library to be an urgent necessity.” Having adopted the resolution, the conference proceeded to elect an Archival Committee, naming Peter Braun archivist, and Benjamin H. Unruh, Abram Klassen, Theodor Ediger, Andreas Vogt, and H. J. Braun as members. It even gave brief instructions as to how to proceed with the collection of materials.<sup>73</sup>

Why should the establishment of a central Mennonite archive suddenly have become “an urgent necessity?” What might Peter Braun’s presentation have contained to produce such a conviction among the delegates?

Braun’s paper is nowhere to be found,<sup>74</sup> nor do the conference minutes divulge its content. But the circular issued by the conference pursuant to its resolution to establish an archive and library, signed by both David H. Epp and Peter Braun, dated June, 1917 – that is, nearly, or possibly immediately, after the conference had ended – does give some indication what must have been said. And what was said had to do with the changing use Russian Mennonites had made of their history just prior to and during World War I. In that circular, after an introductory section and yet another citation of B. H. Unruh’s by now famous statement about Russian Mennonite ignorance of their own history, we read the following:

From a *practical* standpoint, the proposed archive would play a most important role in the defense of our interests [read: *in defense of our privileges*]. Those men, who had the responsibility to represent our interests especially during the last, very difficult years, have often experienced great difficulty in doing so because the knowledge of our own history, and those historical documents that should have been readily available to them, were in a state of utter chaos. They found this most distressing. For example, we were forced – on short notice – to present a variety of documents to the government which everyone was convinced had to be somewhere, but no one knew where. We wrote, telegraphed, here and there, but most often in vain. After much painstaking digging and searching we were finally able to uncover the one or the other piece; but many documents have not been located to this day, nor do we even know where to begin looking for them, never mind where to find them.

This must change! We must know what we possess in terms of historical documents and where we may be able to locate what we need when we need it. ***We must have an historical archive:*** that was the conviction of every delegate to the General Conference. It must also certainly be the conviction of every Mennonite, young and old, learned and unlearned.<sup>75</sup>

Here was an argument in favor of history every Mennonite could understand. The scholarly argument for an archive as a depository of documents to be used for historical research was addressed in the first part of the circular, and made in conference after conference in the years before the war, and in the periodic literature at least since B. H.

Unruh's review of Epp's *Cornies* in 1909. It had fallen largely on deaf ears.<sup>76</sup> But Mennonites understood this practical argument for they had all experienced the frustration of not being able to respond adequately to challenges posed by the events of 1908-1917. And, as we shall see, David H. Epp and Peter Braun, the two men most heavily involved in the search for documents to provide persuasive answers to governmental enquiries and the threats posed by the attacks in the public press, made the presentations at the 1917 Neuhalbstadt Conference and composed the circular. They spoke from bitter experience.

As the circular indicated, the historical pamphlets produced during this period were not "academic" studies. Instead, they were documents intended to influence, or even change, the government's public policy. The first such document appears to have been the 1908 pamphlet, entitled: "The Mennonite Position on the Issue of Propaganda and Religious Freedom." Produced by a consultation of the Molotschna church leaders under the direction of Bishop H. Unruh, it addressed general Mennonite concerns over the government's apparent retreat from its 17 April, 1905, proclamation on religious freedom. Unruh recommended that the document be presented to every congregation for ratification and the results reported back to Bishop A. Goerz by 18 February. A copy was also sent to H. A. Bergmann for circulation in the Duma. In 1910 the same group added an "Explanatory Supplement" to the "Mennonite Position" and commissioned the members of the *KfK* to deliver both to the Department of Spiritual Affairs in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. These first two documents were later published by Raduga Press in 1910<sup>77</sup> and in P. M. Friesen's *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia*.<sup>78</sup> A third document, entitled: "Concerning the History of the Origins of the Mennonites," was also published by Raduga but not by Friesen. Given the similarity of this third document to David H. Epp's 1897 historical addendum to his catechism, it would appear to have been his work. In any case, this third document is the first to make the problem of Mennonite origins a central topic for submission to the Imperial government. And it was made in a document dealing with the sect/confession dispute.

By the time of the Nikolaipol General Conference held on 17-19 October, 1912, members of the *KfK* had become convinced that the government's attempt to change the religious status of the Russian Mennonites from that of a Protestant denomination (confession) to that of a sect had an ulterior motive; and that motive had to do with their exemption from military service. The implications they drew from the government's threatened action induced David H. Epp to recommend, on behalf of the *KfK*, that the conference "publish a brochure [on the sect/confession issue] in the Russian language which,

in the event it became necessary, could be distributed to members of the Duma.”<sup>79</sup> The conference accepted Epp’s recommendation and commissioned the *KfK* immediately to set up a special committee to draft and edit such a brochure. This committee, whose members are not named, met that very evening and approved a document that had apparently already been written. The conference adopted the document on the nineteenth.<sup>80</sup> Entitled “Mennonites in Russia,” it was immediately published by H. A. Ediger & Co. of Berdiansk. A copy, located on the St. Petersburg archive, has the following printed at the top: “Published pursuant to the decision reached at the Congress of Representatives of the Mennonite Congregations in Nikolaipol, Ekaterinoslav gubernia, on 17-19 October, 1912.” The first part, entitled: “Origin of the Mennonites,” once again presents a purely Ludwig Keller interpretation. Chapter II deals with “The Migration of the Mennonites into Russia.” The document, some forty-two pages in length, cannot but have been written prior to the conference, in all likelihood, once again, by David H. Epp. It, too, is a political document and will be treated in the next chapter.

In 1914 came Peter Braun’s pamphlet, initially some fifty pages in length. Then, in 1915, David H. Epp and H. A. Bergmann’s *The Question of Mennonite Origins*, Petrograd 1915, a copy of which was sent me by James Urry. The last two, as well as the document submitted to the Imperial government in 1916,<sup>81</sup> all deal primarily – though not exclusively – with the problem of land liquidation and were intended to persuade the government not to change its pre-war public policy with respect to the Mennonites. In all of these publications, beginning with the 1912 document approved by the Nikolaipol General Conference, original sources played an increasingly important, perhaps pivotal, role in making the Russian Mennonites’ case. Like the Swiss Anabaptists in the 1580s and their Prussian brothers in 1863, the Russian Mennonites chose to defend their positions by means of historical analyses. However, unlike the Prussian Mennonites, who had hired a “relative outsider” to write their treatise, the Russian Mennonites, like their Swiss Anabaptist ancestors and because of the educational explosion in their midst, now had their own men to write their tracts. At first it was P. M. Friesen and David H. Epp; then, after Friesen’s death, David H. Epp and Peter Braun.<sup>82</sup>

The first documents produced during the years 1908-1917 dealt with the defense of rights Mennonites believed had been granted them by the great manifestos of 1905. By 1910 they had moved to the defense of the privileges granted them in the great *Privilegium* of 1800. In the last documents produced during the war they were fighting for their very survival. In one way or another, therefore, all these documents



addressed anticipated or actual changes in government policies that adversely affected the Mennonites; they wished to inform the government of their positions in them. To make their case, however, they needed historical evidence, documents embedded in persuasive historical arguments that would establish their position against that of the authorities.

Added to the policy differences between the Mennonites and the Russian government were differences in perspectives, with Ludwig Keller's interpretation of Anabaptist/Mennonite origins playing a pivotal role in the Mennonite defense. "The problem of Mennonite origins" was therefore not merely a convenient title for so many of the submissions to the government; it was a question that lay at the very heart of this and the later conflict. If it is therefore important to understand Keller's interpretation of these origins, it is also important to discover how that interpretation came to the Russian Mennonites and why they placed so great an emphasis upon it. It is to the telling of that story that we must now turn.



## Through the Eyes of a Stranger

*It was often noted in earlier decades of the present century how greatly it had become the habit of Protestants to hold some German scholar up their sleeves – a different one for every few years but always preferably the latest one – and at appropriate moments to strike the unwary Philistine on the head with this secret weapon, the German scholar having decided in a final manner whatever point might have been at issue in a controversy. From which the charge arose that for the Protestants the unanswerable pope was always some professor – a system more inconvenient than that of Rome, partly because the seat of authority might change over-night and be transferred to a new teacher who had never been heard of before, and partly because if one has to have a pope it is at least better that he should be subject to certain rules and traditions and appointed by a properly constituted authority.*

— Herbert Butterfield, *Christianity and History*

**I**t might surprise the reader to learn that a particular interpretation of Russian Mennonite racial and religious origins could become a central aspect of the Mennonites' defense of their interests before the Tsarist government and be employed in one attempt after another to modify or even change the latter's public policy toward them during the years 1908 to 1917. But that is precisely what happened in at least two areas of protracted conflict between Mennonites and the St. Petersburg government in the first two decades of the twentieth century. These conflicts are the subjects of Parts II and III. The very titles of the Mennonite submissions to their government: "The Origins of the Mennonites," "On the History of Mennonite Origins," or even Peter Braun's "Who are the Mennonites?" make this apparent. One need only to look at the first five or so pages of each of these documents to discover that the interpretation of Anabaptist/Mennonite origins they contain comes directly from the pen of the late nineteenth, early twentieth-century, Münster archivist and scholar, Ludwig Keller. Indeed, by 1914 when Peter Braun wrote his piece, the latter's interpretation had become the common property of virtually all Russian Mennonite apologists. How did they come by it? And why did it become so indispensable to the political arguments of the Russian Mennonites?

The 1917 Neuhalbstadt Conference circular advocating the establishment of a Mennonite archive clearly established the public policy aspect of the above-mentioned documents when it observed, in retro-

spect: "From a *practical* standpoint, the proposed archive would play a most important role in the defense of our interests. Those men, who had the responsibility to represent our interests [before the government] especially during the last, very difficult years, have often experienced great difficulty in doing so because the knowledge of our own history, and those historical documents that should have been readily available to them, were in a state of utter chaos. They found this most distressing . . . ." Little wonder that the conference voted unanimously to establish a Mennonite archive. But it did so only after the fact.

Though Keller's interpretation of Anabaptist/Mennonite origins became an integral and oft-repeated aspect of this Russian Mennonite "defense of [their] interests," those interests were not the reason for their initial attraction to it. Nevertheless, either by a happy coincidence or a fateful conjunction of events (depending upon one's point of view), Keller's interpretation came to serve Mennonite public policy concerns as though it had been crafted for the purpose. Whereas Epp introduced Keller's interpretation to Old Church Mennonites in the addendum to his 1897 catechism, it was H. J. Braun, Peter's older brother, who appears to have introduced it to Russia's Mennonite Brethren. It should not surprise us therefore that both Epp and Peter Braun would employ Keller's interpretation in a number of documents intended to influence government and public opinion in the Mennonites' favor after 1908. This public policy aspect of the recovery of Keller's interpretation is central to this study; nevertheless it is embedded in the larger story of how and why Keller came to the Russian Mennonites. That story has never been told; it is nevertheless important in our context that we do so.

Epp introduced Keller's interpretation in 1897 – as he himself confessed – to dispel his and his peoples' widespread confusion and ignorance regarding the beginnings of their church. He observed:

Concerning the inception of our church, and the time [and place] of its origin, many of us – and many others, too – are very much in the dark. Some contend the Mennonites are a Protestant, that is a Lutheran sect and that the cradle of Mennonitism was Prussia; others say we are of Catholic origin since Menno was originally a Catholic priest; still others accuse us of being "Anabaptists" and regard us, falsely, of being descendants of those fanatics and revolutionaries who, in the sixteenth-century Westphalian city of Münster, wrecked such havoc; and, finally, there are those who hold our church to be a branch of the English Baptists.<sup>1</sup>

But, Epp concluded triumphantly, none of these assumptions were correct. The Mennonites had not grown, like some *sectarian* branch, from the limb of any of the above or other Christian splinter movements. Rather, they represented a completely independent confessional tradi-

tion that reached back in time in a direct, unbroken line, to the very age of the apostles whose teachings and life their tradition had preserved. From this perspective, even the Catholic Church became a *sectarian* deviation from the one, true, holy and apostolic church represented by the Mennonites.

Here was a reversal of the received interpretation of Anabaptist origins of truly stunning proportions.<sup>2</sup> Nor was Epp alone in seeing such implications in Keller's studies. As early as the January, 1888 issue of the *Mennonitische Blätter* (to which Epp had access and on occasion even contributed), a Prussian Mennonite by the name of Carl Harder had written an essay entitled: "Is the Mennonite Church a 'Sect' or Does It Stand in Direct Continuity with the Original Christian Church?"<sup>3</sup> And Gerhard Haake, whose review of Paul Burckhardt's 1899 *The Basel Anabaptists* initiated the discussion of the Münster archivist's work in Mennonite circles, wrote in his rebuttal of Keller's angry attack on his review:

Anyone, who like Keller dares to trump the received interpretation of history, that the despised Anabaptists are not only the carriers of true Christianity but that they also stand in direct historical continuity with ancient Christianity, has the responsibility and duty to place his cards on the table for all to see. Whoever, like Keller, dares to transform the huts of the poor Anabaptists overnight into towering palaces must also show us the foundations upon which the building rests. If this is not forthcoming and if he satisfies himself with delicate allusions, every impartial observer will regard the edifice to be a house of cards. Only the documents in their original form are convincing; excerpts will not do. Where a researcher "only produces the words and sentences important for him, where certain words lose all importance for him, where one wishes to stress only a part," as Keller conceded in his *Erklärung* (explanation), there objective history ends and subjective caprice begins.<sup>4</sup>

Though Epp wrote his essay several years before Haake's review appeared he had not mistaken the import of Keller's studies. Similar conclusions were being drawn by others.

Epp's *Explanations and Elucidations* was reissued in a second edition only two years later, in 1899,<sup>5</sup> indicating a fairly rapid dissemination of the volume. Was its initial popularity based on the author's extended answers to the catechetical questions, or to his analysis of Anabaptist origins? Did the Russian Mennonites, despised and persecuted since time out of mind as Haake suggested, and either ignorant or confused about their origins or religious identity<sup>6</sup> as Epp intimated, suddenly grasp the significance of who they *really* were? What impact might such a realization have had upon the Russian Mennonite consciousness and sense of identity at a time of rapid economic expansion, intellectual awakening, and the government's attempt to integrate them into Russian society?<sup>7</sup>

On 22 November of the very year Epp published his addendum on Mennonite origins, H. J. Braun, then a third-year student at the Hamburg German Baptist Seminary, wrote a letter to Keller. Given the latter's subsequent influence among Mennonites in Russia it is surprising to discover that this is the only letter ever written Keller by a Russian Mennonite. In it, Braun expressed sentiments similar to Epp's. But he stated them more positively, declaring: "It is my goal, while in Germany, to learn as much as possible about the historical origins of the Mennonites." Since Keller "had written so extensively on the Reformation era," an impecunious Braun requested that the archivist send him, gratis, some four of his most important books, books he would later have for sale in his Neuhalbstadt book store. And Keller, though he wrote "most presumptuous" in a marginal note on the letter, nevertheless sent him three of his books.

Epp and Braun's curiosity regarding Anabaptist/Mennonite origins may be seen, at least in part, as one aspect of the thirst for knowledge that was driving the educational explosion among Russian Mennonites at the turn of the century. But such a general observation does not satisfy the historian's curiosity as to how the Russian Mennonites came by their interest in Keller, or what it was in his interpretation that so served their purposes. Greater detail is necessary.

Keller may first have come to the attention of the Russian Mennonites through a "circular" printed in 1883 by Bernard Brons of Emden, Germany. This circular sought to promote the Münster archivist's 1882 book, *Hans Denck: an Apostle of the Anabaptists*, among the world's Mennonites. Some one thousand three hundred copies of the circular were printed, one thousand of which were sent to German and "Russian Mennonite" congregations.<sup>8</sup> At least some of the churches in and around the "Old Colony" must therefore surely have received copies, and Epp, who had begun teaching in the Old Colony's Osterwick elementary school in 1878, may well have seen one. But the complete absence of any letters from Russian Mennonites to Keller, even from David H. Epp who was so energetically to promote Keller's interpretation of Anabaptist/Mennonite origins after 1897, would appear to indicate that the circular with its emphasis on Hans Denck had little apparent impact upon the Russian Mennonites. We are therefore left with the assumption that some later aspect of Keller's interpretation, probably discovered in the pages of the *Mennonitische Blätter*, sparked Epp's interest. But if the *Blätter* were indeed the source of his knowledge of Keller's writings, Epp, by 1897, must also have become fully cognizant of the fact that Keller's work was coming increasingly under attack in Germany. In any case, the Chortitza Church library, as the main library for the Old Colony, eventually contained a full comple-

ment of Keller's books, books cited by Epp in his 1897 addendum on Anabaptist origins. We do not know how they got there. But many of them were acquired many years later by Lawrence Klippenstein from an individual in the Ukraine.<sup>9</sup>

H. J. Braun's interest in Keller's research appears to have come from his study of church history at the Hamburg Baptist Seminary. For it was from there that he wrote his letter to Keller on 22 November, 1897. When I first came across Braun's letter in the "Keller Correspondence" housed in Bethel College's Mennonite Library and Archives some twelve years ago, I assumed that his interest must have been sparked by August, Rauschenbusch, the father of America's "Social Gospel" Walter Rauschenbusch, who was teaching at the Hamburg seminary during Braun's first years there. As it turns out, however, Braun did not study church history under either Rauschenbusch or his son-in-law J. G. Fetzer. Rather, he studied it under Joseph Lehmann, the second theology instructor at the seminary. And the latter, unlike Rauschenbusch, held Keller's work in high regard.<sup>10</sup> The date of Braun's letter to Keller leaves little doubt that Lehmann's lectures were the source of his interest.

Obviously, Braun had not encountered Keller's books or his interpretation before coming to the Hamburg seminary in the fall of 1895. Nor had he seen Epp's catechism before he wrote to Keller, for he spent the summer of 1897 in Hersfeld, Germany, rather than returning home for the summer vacation.<sup>11</sup> While Epp must therefore be given sole credit for introducing Keller's scholarship to the Russian Mennonites,<sup>12</sup> confirmation of his importance may well have come to the Mennonite Brethren through H. J. Braun.

It is important, therefore, to determine in greater detail how Braun – and perhaps other MB students who studied at the Hamburg Baptist Seminary during these years – came to be so attracted to the work of Ludwig Keller. The most plausible source for that interest, as we have just suggested, would appear to lie in the seminary's teachers and curriculum. That curriculum was divided into two, two-year programs: the first consisted in providing students who had not yet completed a *Gymnasium* (high school) education or its equivalent; the second provided them with their essential theological training. Heinrich J. Braun, who arrived at the school in the fall of 1895 without a high school diploma, would therefore have entered upon his theological studies on 2 September, 1897, roughly two and a half months before his letter to Keller. However, according to the seminary's curriculum, he must already have begun his study of church history in the last semester of his second year. That first part of the church history sequence dealt with the ancient period. In the seminary's schedule of classes it is described as follows: "Ancient history. The most ancient period and its development will be

dealt with extensively. A good deal of attention will also be devoted to the dogmatic developments and quarrels of the fourth century." In Part II, which Braun would have begun in September of 1897, he studied "The Middle Ages. The text is Kurtz's 'Abrisz,' [Sketch] but other material and other topics will be added, especially those dealing with the biblical and reforming movements of the time."<sup>13</sup> Joseph Lehmann, son of one of J. G. Oncken's earliest collaborators, was the teacher of church history at the time. That Braun studied under him is made apparent in an obituary notice for his other theology teacher, J. G. Fetzer, which he himself wrote in the *Friedensstimme* on 1 August, 1909. There Braun referred to Fetzer as "our beloved teacher," and to Lehmann, who had died shortly before, as "that dear teacher Lehmann."<sup>14</sup> There is no doubt that Lehmann, unlike Rauschenbusch, regarded Keller's work highly, for in the introduction to volume one of his two-volume *History of the German Baptists* published in 1896, Lehmann wrote:

... To be sure, in spite of this, there was never a time when efforts were not made to restore a true church of believers, such as the Waldenses of the Middle Ages, the Bohemian Brethren, and during their lifetime frightfully persecuted and later maliciously slandered Anabaptists – now once again finally raised to a place of honor by Dr. Ludwig Keller and other important investigators – the great majority of whom were sober, evangelical Christians, people who, after Menno and his reforming activity, were called Mennonites; of whom Goebel says "they represented the more thorough, decisive and complete Reformation, which had been given up by Luther after 1522 and Zwingli after 1524; this they ennobled."<sup>15</sup>

What could be more natural, then, that after embarking upon the church history of the Middle Ages, and there concentrating on the "biblical and reforming movements of the time" as the course description noted, Lehmann should have drawn attention to Keller's studies, especially his *The Reformation and the older Reform Parties* in which the author presented his interpretation of Anabaptist/Mennonite origins? The middle of November could easily have been the time Lehmann reached this point in his lectures, whereupon Braun must immediately have written to Keller.

It is one thing for individuals like David H. Epp and H. J. Braun to have been captivated by Keller's interpretation of Anabaptist/Mennonite origins; it is quite another for it to have been accepted by the rank and file of Russian Mennonite leaders of the time. That the latter were indeed so captivated will become apparent as this study proceeds. Strange as it may at first seem, why this happened would appear to lie in the theological training received by many ministers and teachers of religion in both camps. For Old Church Mennonites, especially those from



the Gnadenfeld Colony, this theological training came in the Barmen Missions School and its Basel counterpart. For MBs, it came in the Hamburg Baptist Seminary. And though the former was pietistic in nature and the latter Baptist, they nevertheless, as we shall see, shared essentially the same interpretation of the grand sweep of church history.

Aside from its influence upon leading Russian personalities around the turn of the eighteenth century,<sup>16</sup> Lutheran Pietism amongst the Mennonites arrived in Russia at the latest with the establishment of the Gnadenfeld Colony in 1835. For among the Prussian Mennonites of Dutch extraction who arrived in that year there were members of a Pietistic Lutheran congregation who had joined the migration, becoming Mennonite in the process. Like the Mannhardts in the Danzig Mennonite Church, these "Lutheran Mennonites," with family names like Lenzmann and Lange, soon began to play prominent roles in the colony. Indeed, in 1851 an August Lenzmann was elected elder. But even as "Mennonites," these Lutheran immigrants continued to foster close relations with the pietistic Moravian Brethren and, from about mid-century, sent their future missionaries and pastors to be educated in the Barmen Missions School. This school was under the direction and powerful influence of its inspector, Dr. Theol. Friedrich Fabri, from 1857 to 1884. Around the mid seventies, the latter became a close friend and collaborator of Ludwig Keller.<sup>17</sup> The following passage taken from a 2 April, 1849 letter from Fabri to his fiancée makes apparent that the two friends shared essentially the same interpretation of church history. Pietistic in its inspiration, it is an interpretation that ties Keller's, Fabri's, the Baptists' and even Thieleman J. Van Braght's interpretations together. In his letter Fabri wrote:

Möttlingen [the home of Christoph Blumhardt, a descendant of the founder of the Basel *Missionsschule*] is in fact also just such a paradise, a small patch on God's wide earth, from which the curse has been removed and which has been transformed into a blessing; there every day is a celebration, and life in the parsonage a constant expectation of the appearance and return of the Lord. That's probably the way it was with the earliest Christians, they lived in constant readiness and awaited the Lord's return, be it either that they should experience the end of the world in their day or that God should remove them before that through death. The first, which even the apostles appear to have expected, did not take place and, in the very moment that the church of Jesus Christ on earth began to regress, as soon, that is, as great masses of the unregenerate began to press into the church (the church of the Lord is ideally to be a fellowship of the regenerate), a new epoch began in church history, an age of God's forbearance which pushed into the distant future that which was originally to have arrived quickly and soon. From that point onward the Christian church again does everything on the basis of natural methods; together with the great enthusiasm for the faith and death-defying love of Christ within the early church there died, or at least became less and less visible, those wonderful powers and gifts which

we see universally disseminated in the apostolic church. The earlier rejection of the world, a common feature of all Christians of the time, gradually ceased, and became a caricature in later monasticism. In its place Christendom begins to become quite comfortable on earth, making long-term living arrangements; the most extreme forms of this secularization appeared in the papacy when it reached the zenith of its power. *It is true that truth cannot be suppressed; she lives on in individual souls and in smaller, generally heavily persecuted associations and sects* [my emphasis]. Then, with the sixteenth century, the stream of truth once more flows more richly, the central aspect of Christianity is once more proclaimed loudly and joyfully, by many; the Word, long buried – this yardstick and guide of faith and life – is once more brought to light. But even the Reformation does not make the kind of progress that had at first been hoped for; no sooner had her heroes and sustainers passed from the scene than the initial new life atrophied; in the eighteenth century there arose a disbelief that broke up and ate at the heritage of the fathers, which it could do the more easily the more devoid of life and blood it had become in the previous century . . .<sup>18</sup>

All one had to do to transform this interpretation into that of a Van Braght, a Keller, or the Baptists was to give specific names like *Taufgesinnte* or Baptists to these unnamed medieval individuals and sects mentioned by Fabri. Keller did this under the influence of Van Braght's writings and his own pietistic upbringing, and there are indications that Fabri accepted his designations.<sup>19</sup> Baptists did the same.<sup>20</sup> This, then, was the interpretation of church history taught at the Barmen Missions School.

According to the mission's own records, and confirmed at least in part by P. M. Friesen, Heinrich Dirks, Sr., was the first student from Gnadenfeld to study at Barmen, doing so from 1863 to 1867. From 1869 to 1880 Dirks served as missionary in Sumatra, becoming bishop of the Gnadenfeld congregation upon his return to South Russia. The second to study in Barmen was Heinrich Franz, Jr., of Chortitza, from 1865 to 1869. From 1874 to 1880 he was teacher at the Halbstadt Secondary School, and later the founder of the Franz and Schroeder factory. He was followed at Barmen by Hermann Lenzmann, also from Gnadenfeld, during the years 1868 to 1872. In 1873 Lenzmann became teacher at the newly established Gnadenfeld Secondary School, one year later matriculating at the University of Tübingen to study under Tobias Beck.<sup>21</sup> Upon his return from Tübingen, Lenzmann taught religion in Gnadenfeld until 1907, with a brief interlude of several years in the Halbstadt Secondary School. Wilhelm Neufeld, also teacher of religion in Gnadenfeld from 1882 to 1898, studied in Barmen from 1877 to 1881. Gerhard Nickel, also from Gnadenfeld and later missionary at Pakantan, attended Barmen from 1882-1888. Johann Huebert, from Andreasfeld and later missionary in Java, studied in Barmen from 1887 to 1893. Heinrich Dirks, Jr., from Gnadenfeld and son of the Sr. Dirks,

was there from 1890 to 1893, as was Abraham Klassen, born in 1870, though the mission records do not give the dates of his attendance. According to these records, Heinrich Dirks, Jr., returned to South Russia to serve his Mennonite people as teacher and minister. And according to Heinrich Goerz's *The Molotschna Settlement*, Abraham Klassen became the teacher of religion at the Halbstadt Central School in 1910 – two years after the arrival of Peter Braun – and in 1917 was ordained bishop of the Halbstadt congregation.<sup>22</sup> All of the above belonged to the Old Church and the vast majority came from, or through, Gnadenfeld. Furthermore, all either entered missionary service or returned to their homeland to become teachers of religion in the secondary schools; from the latter positions they moved into the ministry, some of them becoming very influential bishops, not only in Gnadenfeld. From these positions they induced others to attend Barmen, as the autobiographies contained in the Barmen archives clearly indicate. It would therefore be important to discover what other interpretations of theology were taught at Barmen, especially by Friedrich Fabri whom Heinrich Dirks specifically singled out as his “teacher of theology” in the missionary report given in full by P. M. Friesen.<sup>23</sup> Yet no one has done so.<sup>24</sup> Nor is it our duty to do so here. Nevertheless in order to get some sense of the impact of Fabri's Barmen theology on the Gnadenfeld “Lutheran Mennonites,” one need only read Heinrich Dirks, Sr.'s *The Kingdom of God in Light of the Parables*<sup>25</sup> where the Parable of the Tares, of such critical importance to State-Church advocates, is interpreted in an Augustinian/Lutheran sense to argue that the “field” into which the “wheat” and “tares” are sown represents the church. Christ himself, however, as sixteenth-century Anabaptists argued, unmistakably identified the “field” with the “world” in his explanation to the disciples. The difference is critical, for if the “field” does indeed represent the church, the latter must of necessity contain both the wheat and the tares; in other words, a “believer's” church is ruled out. If the “field” represents the world, however, as Christ pointed out, then the parable has nothing to do with the church, and the apostles' struggle to create and maintain a “pure” church remains the norm. In agreement with this Augustinian/Lutheran interpretation, Dirks described “the Christian church in general and each congregation in particular [as consisting] of a mixed nature: *hat eine Mischgestalt*.”<sup>26</sup> As we have already noted, this was a view categorically and repeatedly rejected by sixteenth-century Anabaptists. Yet here, in a late nineteenth-century Russian Mennonite treatise, it reappeared in its Augustinian/Lutheran form.<sup>27</sup>

If many of the Old Church teachers and ministers were educated predominantly in Barmen by Lutheran Pietists or in the Basel Missions School founded by Württemberg Pietists<sup>28</sup> (Fabri coming from the latter

stock himself<sup>29</sup>) Mennonite Brethren missionaries, preachers and teachers were educated predominantly at the German Baptist Seminary in Hamburg, as was H. J. Braun between 1895 and 1899. That factor, combined with the role played by J. G. Oncken and August Liebig of the German Baptists in the early history of the Mennonite Brethren movement, may well have led to the theory – listed by Epp at the outset of his essay on Anabaptist origins – that “there are those who hold our church to be a branch [as the German Baptist Church] of the English Baptists.” Whatever the case, MB students at the Baptist seminary in Hamburg would have, like H. J. Braun in Lehmann’s lectures, received a direct endorsement of Keller’s interpretation, only in a more specifically denominational context that provided “Baptist” names to the individuals and sects of the Middle Ages referred to by Fabri.

Such an endorsement of Keller’s interpretation is present in most Baptist church history studies. As late as E. H. Broadbent’s well-known *The Pilgrim Church*, first published in 1931 and repeatedly thereafter, we read in the preface:

Perhaps the largest use has been made of the works of Ludwig Keller, especially for the history and teachings of the Waldenses. His position as Keeper of the State Archives, giving access as it does to most important documents, has been used by him to investigate the histories of those known as “heretics,” and his publications are an invaluable contribution to the understanding of these much misunderstood people. Dr. Keller’s book, “Die Reformation und die älteren Reformparteien” is a mine of information and all who can do so should read it. Use has also been made of his book “Ein Apostel der Wiedertäufer” and a number of others written or issued by him.<sup>30</sup>

It was because Keller confirmed earlier Baptist interpretations of church history that he became so attractive to them. J. M. Cramp’s *Baptist History from the Foundation of the Christian Church to the Close of the Eighteenth Century*, first published without date by the American Baptist Publication Society of Philadelphia, makes this quite apparent. Published in a second edition in 1865, a third in 1868, and in London editions of 1868 and 1871, it was even translated into German and published by the Oncken Verlag in 1870. Cited by H. J. Braun on a number of occasions, Cramp voiced his Baptist orientation early on in the study by stating:

Unquestionably the progress of religion in the community, which was emphatically designated “The Church,” was altogether downward during the “Transition Period” [from Constantine to the close of the “Dark Ages”]. It is an interesting enquiry, how far the spirit of the gospel was preserved, and its essential truths maintained, by those whom ecclesiastical historians have denominated “heretics” and “schismatics.” I shall pursue this inquiry in succeeding

chapters. In order to find the true church, we must look out of the "Church" commonly so called.<sup>31</sup>

Little wonder, then, that Cramp could assert when he came to speak of these "heretics" and "schismatics": "One cannot help thinking that they must have been Baptists, so entirely does the position they maintained harmonize with our own."<sup>32</sup>

The above should make clear why, even though he was an MB minister in Rückenau and had been educated in a Baptist school, H. J. Braun could still hold to the same Keller theory of Anabaptist origins as did Epp. Like the latter, who may have been the person to purchase all of Keller's books for the Chortitza church library, Braun later had a full stable of Keller books for sale in his Neuhalbstadt bookstore. For years the two, together with Abraham Goerz<sup>33</sup> until his death in 1911, worked together as members of the *KfK* on issues of major concern to all Russian Mennonites and repeatedly represented their co-religionists before the highest authorities in the land. This did not keep them from sparring in public print with one another from time to time, however. Whereas Keller's theory of Anabaptist origins brought them together on occasion, at other times the Barmen, Old Church/Baptist differences pulled them apart.

Could Keller somehow have come to the Old Church Mennonites via the Barmen, Fabri/Gnadenfeld connection directly? Or did these "Pietistic Mennonites" simply provide a fertile soil in which Keller's interpretation of Anabaptist/Mennonite history flourished? Might Heinrich Dirks, Sr., have been the conduit? Whatever the case, there can be little doubt that the Fabri/Gnadenfeld connection facilitated Keller's acceptance among Old Church Mennonites once his interpretation became known, as the Hamburg/Baptists connection did among Russia's Mennonite Brethren. Yet, Peter Braun's document aside, there appears a greater reluctance on the part of Russian MBs to associate themselves openly with Keller. P. M. Friesen, for example, never mentions his name in his *magnum opus* though he cites Epp's *Explanations and Elucidations*. Nor, curiously enough, does Peter's brother, Heinrich, cite him anywhere, even though both he and Friesen adopted, at least to a degree,<sup>34</sup> Keller's interpretation of Anabaptist origins. One thing is clear, however: Keller did come to the Russian Mennonites, and initially through the pen of David H. Epp. He would play an important role on both sides of the Mennonite divide, though a more silent one on the MB side.

Why, if they were aware of the attack on Keller's scholarship, did H. J. Braun's younger brother Peter, as well as the author[s] of the 1910 and 1912 submissions to the Russian Duma relating to the question of the

sectarian or non-sectarian character of the Russian Mennonite Church,<sup>35</sup> cling so tenaciously to his interpretation?<sup>36</sup> The answer would appear to be at least twofold: first, because of Alexander Klaus' description of Anabaptist origins; and second, because of the arguments Keller provided Russian Mennonites in their defense against the government's attempt to label them a sect.

In his 1974 essay on Russian Mennonite historiography, David Rempel placed Klaus' study – along with the Emancipation Decree of February, 1861 and the reforms that followed – at the inception of the Russian Mennonite historiographical development. He observed further that the publication of the original Russian version of Klaus' book "created a lively, at times bitter, controversy among Russian publicists and students of the country's major economic problems."<sup>37</sup> Even before its publication in book form, portions had been serialized in the influential journal *Vestnik Evropy*. Rempel argues, however, that few Mennonites read the Russian original of 1869; only when a German translation appeared in 1887, coinciding with several different centennial celebrations commemorating the arrival of the Prussian Mennonites in the Ukraine, did Mennonites become acquainted with it. However, whereas virtually every Mennonite writing on the Russian Mennonite story emphasizes its significance, no one has so much as alluded to Klaus' interpretation of Anabaptist origins. Perhaps the reason for this lies in Klaus' theory of those origins, a theory Epp described in his essay as "accusing us of being 'Anabaptists' and regarding us, falsely, as being descendants of those fanatics and revolutionaries who, in the sixteenth century . . . wrecked their havoc."

Before we seek to come to grips with Klaus' interpretation, however, it may be instructive to draw attention to a curious document in P. M. Friesen's history that may be relevant to the way in which the Russian Mennonites read Klaus' description of Anabaptist origins. The document in question is apparently dated August, 1864 and appears to be an interrogation of Johann Wieler, one of the early "brothers" and later MB minister, by an Ekaterinoslav official named Inspector Tscherniavsky. Coming at a time when MBs were still somewhat on the "wild side" (they were called *Hüpfer*),<sup>38</sup> some of the questions are understandable. But others, such as the ones referring to polygamy and related matters, have the smell of "Münster" written all over them. Indeed, the interrogator would appear to have been quite familiar with the then current very negative West European (especially German) interpretation of Anabaptist history which had it that Anabaptism began with the rise of Thomas Müntzer and culminated in the Münster debacle.<sup>39</sup> The inspector,<sup>40</sup> for example, made the following observations to which Wieler was forced to respond in writing:

**Inspector:** After their second baptism they consider themselves free from all sin and yield themselves openly to sensual indulgences.

The *Anabaptists* [in all of the material relating to the 1860 schism there is no other mention of Anabaptists] reject the dogmas of all established religions as well as the faith of the Bible and believe only in a revelation of the Holy Spirit and maintain that everything they do is given them by the Spirit.

The will of God is to be enforced with the sword.

They state that a harvest is coming accompanied with their sword. God is calling on the faithful to do away with all other Christians, whom they consider unclean.

They secretly agree to curtail all contact with unbelievers and to act on the orders of their prophets. They teach that it is proper to destroy unbelievers, and shout at them: The sword of the Lord come upon you! The holy ones of this new faith hope that God will command them to destroy the ruling princes with fire and sword so that they may take control of the affairs of state themselves.

The Anabaptists maintain that, according to God's will, they are to hold all goods in common. They demand that the wealthy distribute their property amongst the poor.

The Anabaptists permit themselves all kinds of irregularities and practices that are against chastity.

They proclaim the justness of polygamy.<sup>41</sup>

The foregoing makes it unmistakable that at least this Russian official had done some reading in the traditional negative interpretation of Reformation Anabaptism.<sup>42</sup> Was he alone? Were there others in high government office who shared his views, views that the events of the 1860s appear to have confirmed at least in this official's mind? We do not know from which sources Tscherniavsky drew his information on sixteenth-century Anabaptism, nor does P. M. Friesen seem to have been interested in finding out, observing only in commentary:

We have produced this entire odious and ridiculous document (the Accusations) word for word in all its length and breadth. It is at once both interesting and boring, both stupid and contradictory, and also fiendishly sly. There has never been a case in which theological and judicial expertise appeared more ridiculous. We shall not attempt to unearth the sources of the theological position nor determine who is responsible for the pulpit-like presentation. It is sufficient to realize that the accusations were in fact made, and were seriously considered at one time by the high officials concerned.<sup>43</sup>

Friesen does not even appear to have tried to uncover the source of these "accusations." Yet, if they were indeed "considered at one time by the high officials," it would seem important to know who held them and where they had acquired them.<sup>44</sup>

This "inquisition," where Mennonite Brethren were virtually considered guilty before an enquiry had ever taken place, must have had a chilling effect. For, in spite of Friesen's bewildered response to the document, someone must have understood that the evils of Müntzer and

the Münsterite Anabaptists were being imputed to the new movement, perhaps even to all Mennonites.

The above interrogation took place in 1864. Only three years later Alexander Klaus also traced Russian Mennonite origins back to a revolutionary beginning, this time, however, to Thomas Müntzer. Whereas the above interrogation may have been known only to a few Mennonite leaders and government officials, Klaus' study was published for all to read, first in the Russian language (1867) and then in a German translation just a few years before the centennial celebrations of 1889.

Who was Alexander Klaus and what weight did his study carry? P. M. Friesen calls him a "privy councilor."<sup>45</sup> Rempel informs his readers that from 1848 on he held various positions in the Ministry of State Domains; from 1853 to 1866 he was attached to agencies under that ministry that dealt exclusively with the colonists; and from 1866 to 1870 "he was one of the leading members of a committee appointed by the Ministry of State Domain to draft a new statute for the settlers preparatory to the abolition of their special legal status in state peasantry."<sup>46</sup> Were his views shared by other government officials? Could his interpretation of Anabaptist origins have consequences for the Russian Mennonites? Would it be politic to reject it openly?

As privy councilor, Klaus belonged to the Russian civil service bureaucracy which was largely under the influence of Western European "enlightened" ideology at the time. As Orlando Figes argues, this ideology "shaped the Great Reforms of the 1860s." Civil servants, he continues, "believed in the bureaucracy's mission to civilize and reform Russia along Western lines. Most of them stopped short of the liberal demand for a state based upon the rule of law with civil liberties and a parliament: their understanding of a *Rechtsstaat* was really no more than a bureaucratic state functioning on the basis of rational procedures and general laws."<sup>47</sup> That Klaus fitted this description is made apparent in his choice of sources for the interpretation of Anabaptist origins.

Only a few paragraphs into his description of these origins, Klaus revealed his source as Wilhelm Zimmermann's three volume history of the German Peasant War written some two decades earlier, in 1841-1843.<sup>48</sup> This history, with its "Young Hegelian" revolutionary perspective also served Friedrich Engels and later Marxist historians as the foundation for their interpretation. It described Thomas Müntzer as being centuries ahead of his time. Indeed, it made of the medieval mystic an enlightened, rational revolutionary fighting for the natural rights of man. And it made the Anabaptists into his disciples. Such a revolutionary reinterpretation of Müntzer, hesitantly underway since the time of the French Revolution, was, however, based upon plagiarism and outright falsification.



To create his enlightened portrayal of Müntzer, Zimmermann borrowed Sebastian Franck's description of the revolutionary as given in his 1536 *Chronica*, copied it verbatim, but then removed the term "Holy Spirit" wherever Franck had used it, inserting "reason" in its place. In so doing, Zimmermann transformed Müntzer from a revolutionary imbued with medieval mysticism<sup>49</sup> into a proto Marxist. That Zimmermann had a bad conscience over what he had done is made apparent in his revised, second edition of 1854; though, even here, he did not reveal the extent of his willful transgressions in the first edition. Nevertheless, his conversion from Hegelianism to a form of pietistic Christianity sometime around 1852 – after the failure of the 1848 Revolution, in which he was heavily involved – motivated him to modify his interpretation in significant ways. Klaus, who read and used Zimmermann's first edition, quite apparently never read the second. Or, if he did, like later Marxist historians, he did not allow it to change the "truth" he had gleaned from the first.

Klaus nowhere cited the title of Zimmermann's history. Indeed, he did not even mention Zimmermann's first name. Nonetheless, he did say:

Thomas Müntzer, a contemporary and adversary of Luther, appears in the annals of human history as a personality of the highest importance, who, in respect of his ideas, was far in advance of his society. His powerful rhetoric caused the masses of precisely those regions to rise in defense of their rights from which the major portion of our German colonists emigrated, and where, according to Zimmermann, the historian of the great Peasant War,<sup>50</sup> Müntzer still had a host of secret followers who clung to his ideas long after his death.<sup>51</sup>

Having identified his source, Klaus proceeded to quote a lengthy passage directly from Zimmermann's study which revealed the advanced nature of Müntzer's program. It concluded with the following words:

... Some of Müntzer's ideas have been implemented, and in those countries where that is the case they have laid the foundation of the peoples' greatness and happiness. To this very day, every religious and political movement that is working for change in a country takes its point of departure from Müntzer's ideas. The passage of time has purified some of these; others have not yet matured. It is for the latter reason they still sometimes appear to us to be mistakes rather than truths.<sup>52</sup>

Klaus then proceeded to describe Müntzer's ideas and the actions that flowed from them, in some eight further pages completely dependent solely and alone on Zimmermann's study. He concluded with what was for the Russian Mennonites a disconcerting pronouncement that Müntzer's ideas had been picked up by the "fanatical Anabaptists."

From his discussion of Müntzer, Klaus proceeded to the events in

Münster and to Menno Simons, citing the latter's *Foundations of Christian Doctrine* and presenting a fairly competent overview of Menno's thought and activities. But he failed to explain the transition from a revolutionary, enlightened Müntzer to a pacifistic, Biblicist Menno. By now, however, that no longer mattered, for the damage had been done. The revolutionary, enlightened Thomas Müntzer stood as the *fons et origo* of the Russian Mennonites. And in Klaus' eyes, as in those of the pre-1852 Zimmermann, Müntzer was a great hero and the protagonist of human enlightenment and liberty.

For the Russian Mennonites, however, this interpretation must have appeared an utter disaster, coming as it did precisely in those years in which their exemption from military service was under attack by the Russian government whom Klaus appeared to represent. If Müntzer really was the progenitor of the Anabaptists and by extension of the Russian Mennonites, was nonresistance really an integral aspect of their religious beliefs? Or was it not rather merely a convenient afterthought, something they had appropriated after the Münster revolution in order to differentiate and separate themselves from the revolutionaries<sup>53</sup> in the eyes of the authorities? If the latter, why should the Russian government continue to exempt them from military service? Did Klaus have such an argument in mind? Furthermore, for years, indeed centuries, Mennonites had sought to free themselves from the stigma of Müntzer and Münster. It had been for precisely this reason that Thieleman J. van Braght, in his seventeenth-century *Martyrs Mirror*, had sought to connect the "peaceful" Anabaptists to the persecuted Waldenses of the Middle Ages; had indeed sought to establish a pacifist believer's church tradition from the times of the apostles down to his own day in which to anchor Menno. It was for the very same reason that German and Dutch Mennonites turned with such enthusiasm to Ludwig Keller when his studies first appeared in 1880. For, to this point, insiders had tried to make the argument against the enemies' attacks that had continued since the early years of the Reformation; with Keller's appearance, an "impartial" outsider was making the case for them. But here, with Klaus' study, the old antagonistic argument once more raised its ugly head, though in a much more positive, "enlightened" revolutionary light. Perhaps that made it all the more dangerous to Russian Mennonites. What is more, Mennonites may have thought that Klaus' interpretation came with the official blessing of the Tsarist government. Dared Russian Mennonites challenge, never mind openly attack, such an interpretation?

The first book on Mennonite history to appear after Klaus' study – indeed the first Russian Mennonite history of any kind – was Martin Klaassen's *History of the Defenseless Taufgesinnte Churches from the*

*Time of the Apostles to the Present.*<sup>54</sup> Perhaps to avoid any confrontation with the Russian censors it was printed in Danzig and had the endorsement of the "Leadership of the Mennonite Congregation at Köppental, vicinity of Saratov" where Klaassen was a teacher. Intended to rouse the Russian Mennonites from their lethargy with respect to their non-resistant principles, it pointed to the Prussian Mennonites, who, having grown complacent over time, had sacrificed those principles with hardly a whimper of objection when the cabinet order of 3 March, 1868 had abolished their military exemption. Russian Mennonites might soon face the same eventuality, and the same result, in the near future. The Köppental leadership believed it was incumbent upon them, therefore,

... to revive and renew this lost consciousness of our church historical calling in our congregations. To accomplish this we required a comprehensive, overarching history of the non-resistant Taufgesinnte congregations and fellowships from the time of the Apostles to the present, from which, in light of the apostolic – or better – the Word of God, everyone may discover *that those churches entrusted with the peace confession are not the product of some primitive, unclean and fanatical spirit of the time of the Reformation, but rather, in regard to their confession [of faith], the church of Jesus Christ that has remained true to his pure Word* [my emphasis].<sup>55</sup>

No doubt about it, Klaassen and his sponsors had a two-fold purpose in mind: the first was to demolish the assumption that Mennonites had anything to do with revolutionaries like Thomas Müntzer from the age of the Reformation; the second was to address the immediate problem of nonresistance among Russian Mennonites and the threat to its continued existence now being posed by the Russian government. In both the author's and the leadership's mind, the two were obviously interrelated.

David Rempel argued that Russian Mennonites probably did not read Klaus' book until it appeared in German translation in 1887. But it is quite apparent that Martin Klaassen read it,<sup>56</sup> and if he did, others must have done so as well. All the more so if Klaassen's history is at least a partial rejoinder to Klaus' interpretation of Anabaptist origins.

That Klaassen's study was just such a partial rejoinder to Klaus' interpretation would appear to be confirmed by the above quotation, his total rejection of Enlightenment ideology and the French Revolution<sup>57</sup> (the ideology of Russian bureaucrats like Klaus) and the structure of the study itself. Had Klaassen simply, like Mannhardt and the Prussian Mennonites, been concerned to influence the Russian government's public policy with regard to Mennonite military exemption, he might simply have returned to the Russian government's original grant of the exemption

and its repeated confirmations. He did not do so, however, because he had other concerns. Chief among the latter was his desire, like that of Van Braght before him, to free Menno and the Mennonites from any association with Müntzer and Münster. For Klaassen and the Russian Mennonites this was all the more important because being associated with the sixteenth-century revolutionaries undermined their argument in favor of military exemption with the Russian authorities. In order to disassociate Menno from Muntzer even before Keller appeared on the Russian Mennonite horizon, Klaassen therefore returned to Van Braght's and the Baptists' argument of the continuity of a believer's church from apostolic times to the present. Unlike Van Braght and the Baptists, however, he focused on the principle of nonresistance, not on believer's baptism. Referring to the Prussian government, Klaassen wrote:

In the meantime, persons in the highest echelons of governmental power were not inclined to accept the fact that our principle of nonresistance derived, and was rooted, exclusively in our faith, but much rather believed that Menno – who to this very day is still erroneously held to be the true founder of the *Taufgesinnte* and the originator of the principle – did so only in order to differentiate and separate his followers from the fanatical Anabaptists, namely the Münsterites, so that they would be spared persecution by the governing authorities.<sup>58</sup>

To undermine such a conclusion, Klaassen combined Van Braght's interpretation with that of the Baptists,<sup>59</sup> especially J. Newton Brown's,<sup>60</sup> to establish a great nonresistant tradition beginning before the Constantinian nexus of Church and State to the present. Klaassen therefore had to argue that there were only periodic reformations, not new beginnings, in this tradition. Neither Peter Waldo<sup>61</sup> nor Menno<sup>62</sup> had begun new movements; theirs were no sectarian separations from earlier movements. The nonresistant *Taufgesinnte* stood in a direct line of descent from the pure Apostolic Church itself. According to Klaassen, this history fell into three major segments:

The first period begins approximately with the fourth century, when the first so-called Anabaptists began to separate themselves from the dark recesses of a church already in decline, and reaches forward to Peter Waldo (1170); the second encompasses the time to Menno (1536) and the third reaches to the present.<sup>63</sup>

With the unbroken line of descent from the Apostolic Church established, Klaassen employed Gottfried Arnold's *History of Church and Heretics* to establish the apostolic orthodoxy of this great tradition. The real sectarians, therefore, should one wish to enquire, were the Catholics, the Lutherans, the Reformed, the Anglicans, and so forth. Klaassen made no mention of the Russian Orthodox Church, however.

By the time Klaassen's book appeared in print, the military crisis for the Russian Mennonites had passed. Once more the "all merciful" Tsar had, "with gentle but firm hand" and motivated by his patriarchal, compassionate heart, resolved the legal and bureaucratic impasse by intervening personally to "free us in every respect from military service" without in any way violating "our interpretation of Scripture."<sup>64</sup>

Klaassen's history does not appear to have had much staying power among Russian Mennonites.<sup>65</sup> The reasons are at least twofold. First, the crisis it addressed was clearly over by the time the book appeared in print. Hence, as Mennonites tend to do, everyone could go back to life as usual and continue to ignore the past. Secondly, however, and perhaps more importantly, Köppenthal was the home of the Claas Epp who led the "great trek" to Central Asia only six years after the publication of Klaassen's book, there to await Christ's return. Not only was Klaassen's book written under the sign of these millenarian expectations,<sup>66</sup> but he himself joined the trek and died en route.<sup>67</sup> Should other, more stable Mennonites read the book of one so deluded? Perhaps Klaassen, too, should be ignored in the same way that Mennonites ignored Klaus' interpretation of Anabaptist origins.<sup>68</sup>

The centennial commemorations of the coming of Prussian Mennonites to the Ukraine, celebrated by David H. Epp in his *Die Chortitzer Mennoniten*, then, did not lead Russian Mennonites to the writings of Ludwig Keller. Those writings arrived later and were first exploited by Epp in his 1897 catechism. This catechism was not simply a replication or republication of an earlier version of a Russian Mennonite catechism. Passages like the following make this apparent:

But let us now return to the issue of baptism proper. Many a soul in our midst has been tortured by the question, which form of baptism – pouring or immersion – is the more correct, and whether or not we may have missed something here that could lead to the destruction of our souls. Our forefathers of the dark and distant past, the Waldensian congregations, made no fundamental dogma out of it as Dr. Ludwig Keller, the famous researcher of ancient history, proves. [He writes]: "to be sure they nearly always performed the holy transaction by means of sprinkling, though, in isolated instances, immersions are provable; they allowed the desire of the baptismal candidate to be determinative in these instances." That one had not made a fundamental principle of it even in the age of the Apostles the "Teachings of the Twelve Apostles" demonstrate, p. 22, where one reads: "With respect to baptism, however, keep it short and simple – thus: . . ."<sup>69</sup>

Aside from presaging a much more comprehensive reliance upon Ludwig Keller ("the famous [nearly infallible] researcher of ancient history") in his appendix, this statement by Epp points to certain aspects of the emergence of the MB Church that quite apparently troubled the mother

church and indicate the salient differences between the two groups. Passages like these are clearly directed against an MB understanding.<sup>70</sup>

Though Keller may have been useful to Epp in his defense of Old Church Mennonites against MBs, when he came to discuss the "Beginnings and Development of Our Mennonite Congregations" Keller no longer played a partisan role. Epp introduced his short history with the confession that "many among us – as well as among others – are very much in the dark as to the time and the nature of the origin of our congregations." If this was true of Epp, the best informed among Russian Mennonites at the time, it must have been even more true of everyone else. Many assert, he continued, that the Mennonites are a Protestant, that is to say, a Lutheran sect and have their origin in Prussia; others argue they are of Catholic origin since Menno himself was originally a Catholic priest; still others accuse them of being "Anabaptists" and incorrectly hold them to be followers of those fanatics and revolutionaries who, in the sixteenth century, committed gross excesses in Münster, Westphalia; and yet still others hold their congregations to be a branch of the English Baptists. But none of these assumptions corresponded with the truth, Epp asserted, since the Mennonites had not emerged from any of the above-named sectarian movements. ***Rather, they represented a completely independent confession of faith [Glaubensrichtung] that could trace its inception back directly to the age of the Apostles.***<sup>71</sup>

In order to prove the truth of the latter statement, Epp argued, one had only to look at the Mennonite confession of faith. There one would see almost instantaneously that the Mennonite Church possessed, and had retained throughout the centuries, a completely independent identity that clearly distinguished it from those of the Catholics, the Lutherans, and the Reformed. Adult baptism, communion, rejection of the oath and nonresistance were the most notable signs by which they had always been recognized. To retain these they had endured untold persecution and suffering. To be sure, they were called "Mennonites" after Menno. But this was not a name their forefathers had arrogated to themselves, nor had Menno proclaimed himself their founder. It was their enemies who had first called them "Mennonites." Gradually, however, the use of this name had become more common and been adopted by Menno's followers. According to Keller, these groups had called themselves "brothers" or simply "Christians" at the beginning, and in Holland they still called themselves *Doopsgezinde*. When others began to appropriate the term "Christian," they had begun to call themselves simply "brethren." But (quoting Keller): "As long as Church history has been in existence, it has had nothing to say about these brothers as a separate confessional fellowship."<sup>72</sup>

Epp then proceeded to develop Keller's interpretation, beginning with Constantine and Pope Sylvester, and moving through to Peter Waldo, Hans Denck and the Reformation Radicals.<sup>73</sup> Having arrived at Menno Simons, however, Epp departed from Keller who had placed Denck instead of Menno at the center of his story<sup>74</sup> and turned instead to B. C. Roosen's interpretation of Menno and the edition of the latter's works by Johannes Deknatel, both of whom stood under the influence of Van Braght's interpretation of history. As descendants of the Dutch Mennonites, Menno had in any case always been more important to the Prussian/Russian Mennonites than Hans Denck. Therefore, even though Denck, with his medieval mystical perspective, was the hero of Keller's interpretation, he could never play such a role for the Dutch Mennonites. They knew themselves to be sons and daughters of Menno even though as Klaus observed, they were totally ignorant of him. In this one important respect, then, Epp could not follow Keller despite the fact that he repeatedly praised him to the sky as the most trustworthy of historians. Epp was not above choosing what suited his purposes.

Nevertheless Keller's interpretation was useful in divorcing Menno from the Münsterites, to whom Epp devoted a fairly substantial section. Klaassen had already used Van Braght's version of the thesis to separate Menno from Münster.<sup>75</sup> Epp must have known Klaassen's book, but disdained to mention it or Klaus' interpretation of Anabaptist origins. The first (though his larger argument was virtually identical to that of Keller) was off limits because of the Claas Epp fiasco; the second, because of Klaus's interpretation of the revolutionary origins of Anabaptism. Keller had none of these drawbacks; indeed, he was an outsider, a widely recognized and distinguished German scholar who had worked from the original sources. Epp therefore considered Keller an impartial and unimpeachable authority on their history.

In order to deal successfully with Menno's relationship to the Münsterites, Epp was forced to locate Melchior Hoffmann – the most influential of early Dutch Anabaptists – in the old evangelical pacifist tradition, a tradition from which Jan Matthys and Jan van Leyden had separated themselves when they attempted to inaugurate their millennial kingdom. Quoting from Keller's first book, *The Anabaptist Kingdom in Münster*, Epp argued that it was this desire that had "constituted them into a new Anabaptist sect." Martin Klaassen had fallen prey to the same error. It did not matter that he had eschewed violence and lauded non-violence. For could enemies not point to the similarities between his millenarian expectations and those of the Münsterites? Could they not say that the similarities between the two in this regard were a sign that the Münsterites had in fact been the forerunners

of the Russian Mennonites? Perhaps Klaus had been right after all.

The Münsterite “Anabaptists” had therefore to be described in the most negative of terms. And Epp did so, calling them “riff raff . . . robbers, murderers and sundry . . . criminals.” Münster, already a powder keg, had exploded with the arrival of Jan van Leyden and Jan Matthys. Even the learned Bernard Rothmann had been drawn into their orbit. Little wonder that they had, in due course, established polygamy and a community of goods. Epp observed:

That, in a few words, is the history of the Münster Anabaptists. Even so, we have seen enough to make us turn away in disgust and to ask, in righteous indignation: how, and with what right may one assert that the “old evangelicals” and the Anabaptists are one and the same fellowship? In contrast, we find that they had nothing in common; indeed, it is not even possible to compare them in any respect.<sup>76</sup>

To confuse the Münsterites with the “old-evangelicals” was a perversion of truth, Epp concluded, since any impartial observer would have to concede

. . . that between the two groups there is no inner connection whatsoever, for even though the Anabaptists also baptized adults we now know how they did it. To confuse the old evangelicals with the Münsterites is therefore the worst kind of misrepresentation of the truth that has ever been made. And what was the attitude of the leaders of the old congregations to them? All of the leaders, with Menno at their head, worked against the Anabaptists verbally and in writing, Menno even calling on the local authorities to suppress them.<sup>77</sup>

The distinction between Old Evangelical *Taufgesinnte* and Münsterite Anabaptists necessitated a rethinking of the role Menno Simons had played in the movement. Was he a founder of the movement, had he converted away from the Münsterites, what had been his role in the confrontation between the two movements? One thing had to be clear from the outset: since the Russian Mennonites were the descendants of the Dutch Anabaptists, Menno – not Keller’s own hero, Hans Denck the mystical Anabaptist – had to be their hero. Unlike Keller, they had little choice in the matter. Nor could the latter, whose general theory of the Reformation they adopted, provide them with their interpretation of Menno. For that interpretation Epp turned to the 1848 Menno biography by Berend Karl Roosen, former pastor of the Hamburg-Altona Mennonite church,<sup>78</sup> whose interpretation in many ways confirmed Keller’s later portrayal of the relationship between the Anabaptists, the Reformation, and the “older reform parties.”

To separate Menno from the Münsterites, Roosen, like Van Braght and the interpretation emanating from the *Martyrs Mirror*, also differ-



entiated between *Taufgesinnte* and *Wiedertäufer*: the former constituting the peaceful branch of the Dutch movement which had grown up in regions overrun by Waldenses and Hussites; the latter being the upstart, revolutionary and illegitimate (bastard) movement that only had adult baptism in common with the legitimate group. Even though Roosen conceded that the connection between the *Taufgesinnte* and the Waldenses could not be established with absolute certainty, the assumption that such a connection had to exist served as his operative theory throughout the study. Thus he described Menno's relationship to the *Taufgesinnte* in the following words:

Now, among the various persons among the *Taufgesinnte* who became well-known during these years there was especially one man who, through his great services in their behalf, and after whom all *Taufgesinnte* are therefore called, should be known and held in high esteem: that person is Menno Simons. He, above all others, was responsible for keeping the *Taufgesinnte* on a peaceful and evangelical path, and who kept them from being submerged in the revolutionary *Wiedertäufer* movement; he, together with other outstanding personalities, saw to it that the congregations were established through his teaching, writings and disputations. Totally dedicated to his Lord, he worked untiringly on behalf of those congregations, setting them and us an example of steadfast faith and loving care. 1 Cor. 3: 11 was his foundation; and to it he remained true through times of deprivation and danger to the very end, though at times not without human error.<sup>79</sup>

According to Roosen, then, Menno was not the founder of a new movement; he had simply placed himself in the service of the long-established *Taufgesinnte* congregations (with their roots in the much older Waldensian movement) at a critical juncture when the Münsterites (*Wiedertäufer*) threatened to overwhelm them. As the restorer of an ancient tradition,<sup>80</sup> Menno could therefore not have had anything to do with the Münsterites.<sup>81</sup> Rather, through his activity and writings, he had reconstituted and strengthened the peaceful, evangelical *Taufgesinnte/Mennonite* church of which Epp and the Russian Mennonites were the legitimate heirs.

Epp's addendum on Mennonite history in his 1897 catechism appears to have been driven by the need to remove any lingering doubts about the revolutionary origins of Anabaptism and the assumption that Menno and his followers had adopted a nonresistant position only after the fact, that is, after the failure of the Münster revolution. If the latter were not the case, it could be argued as the Prussian government itself had done on the evidence supplied by Wilhelm Mannhardt, that pacifism had never been an essential tenet of Mennonite theology. In 1873 the Russian Minister Valuev had informed the Mennonite delegates, sent to St. Petersburg to petition the Tsar on the matter, that he

was fully aware that their Mennonite brothers in Prussia had been forced to give up their nonresistance.<sup>82</sup> Was he also aware that Wilhelm Mannhardt, who had written the history of Mennonite nonresistance for the Prussian Mennonites in 1863, later admitted that he himself did not believe in it; that young Prussian Mennonite men did not live by it; and that Menno himself had only become non-resistant after the Münster disaster because of political, not religious, considerations?<sup>83</sup> Whatever the case, Epp did not return to the subject of Mennonite origins until 1910. By then, however, the question of origins had taken on added political significance in the sect/confession debate initiated by the Tsarist government.

Beginning in 1907, the St. Petersburg authorities began, slowly but surely, to attempt to transform the religious status of the Russian Mennonites from that of a Protestant confession, or denomination, granted them by Paul's great *Privilegium*, to that of a sect. The Mennonites protested this proposed change in two documents, one of early 1908,<sup>84</sup> and another of 8 March, 1910<sup>85</sup> that was submitted directly to the Minister of Internal Affairs. These two documents are reprinted in P. M. Friesen; not, however, a third, which is contained in the 1910 collection published by Raduga entitled: *Documents Regarding the Religious Concerns of the Mennonites*. I have not been able to determine why Friesen omitted it from his history, unless it was his sensitivity toward Keller's interpretation of Anabaptist history, a sensitivity that appears obvious from the fact that, unlike virtually every other Russian Mennonite writer of the time, Friesen does not mention Keller even once in his entire volume. This seems passing strange given the fact that the title of his book, *The Old-Evangelical Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia*, is vintage Keller.<sup>86</sup> This third document in the Raduga collection is entitled: "On the History of Mennonite Origins." We already suggested in an earlier chapter that it must have been written by David H. Epp since it reproduced all of the latter's earlier arguments regarding Menno and the *Taufgesinnte*, and listed only the works of Ludwig Keller as sources.<sup>87</sup>

This third document clearly places the Keller/Epp interpretation of Mennonite history in the service of the sect/confession debate initiated by the government's action. At the very outset the document states: "In the draft law issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs submitted to the Duma on 23 February, 1907, under No. 1476, the introductory explanation clearly differentiates between sect and confession." It then continues:

The following church bodies are listed under 'confession': Roman Catholic, Evangelical-Lutheran, Reformed, among others; Mennonites, however are listed, in P. III, Section 3, under sects, even though this contradicts the existing laws. In the fundamental law [of the empire], Mennonites are listed along with other

Protestant confessions (Vol. XI, Part III, pp. 1104 & 1105, 1896 edition). This indicates that until the present, Mennonites have, like the Reformed and other Protestants, been legally recognized as a Protestant confession and not as a sect as they are now termed in the Minister of the Interior's draft law.

Not only did the Minister of Internal Affairs's draft law contradict the existing laws of the land, the document continued, it also flew in the face of the historical evidence. For Mennonites, according to the generally accepted definition of the word, could not constitute a sect since the term referred only to individuals or groups who, as the result of differences of opinion, had separated themselves from the main body of a church, such as, for example, heretical groups mentioned in the New Testament. According to Keller's interpretation of Anabaptist/Mennonite history, Mennonites had never done so. His studies therefore provided the historical evidence to disprove the government's revised designation. Because of its importance and as an indication of why it became so engrained in the Russian Mennonite psyche, the passage deserves to be quoted.

However," it begins, "the Mennonite Church is not an errant branch [Abzweigung] of any other church or church fellowship, as Büchner defines the term 'sect'; furthermore, nor is our teaching heresy in the New Testament sense of the term. It is unnecessary to attempt to prove the latter, since anyone who wishes to do so may, on the basis of our catechism, convince himself of the fact that our confession of faith is consonant with the teachings of the Gospel. As an example of the fact that our church is not a deviant branch of any other currently existing church – as many have erroneously believed until now – but much rather has the right to have its historical independence recognized, we are now able to present *indisputable facts*, on the basis of which we can, without exaggeration, assert the following: The Christian stream to which Mennonites belong existed in the universal Christian Church well before the Lutheran or Reformed Churches, *as Dr. Ludwig Keller – among others – has demonstrated on the basis of a mass of documents which he has taken great pains to gather and which he has evaluated in his many books. Some were at first skeptical about his interpretations, and many opposed them, but no one has been able to undermine the veracity of the facts presented by him* [my emphasis].

The author then proceeded to cite as evidence Keller's *History of the Anabaptists and their Kingdom in Münster* (Münster 1880), *Hans Denck, an Apostle of the Anabaptists* (Leipzig 1882), *The Reformation and the older Reform Parties* (Leipzig 1885), *The Waldensians and the German Bible Translations* (Leipzig 1888), and his *On the History of the Old-Evangelical Congregations* (Berlin 1887).

It had to follow from Keller's interpretation that Menno could not be portrayed as the founder of a new church. To have done so would have justified the sectarian label. This must have come as a welcome surprise

to Epp as he thought about the application of Keller's interpretation to the government's "sectarian" initiative. Menno was therefore portrayed as one who "became the bishop of the numerous and long familiar adherents of the teaching of adult baptism living in Holland."<sup>88</sup> This teaching had arisen many centuries earlier and could only be identified with the appearance of the "old brothers" in the first Christian centuries.<sup>89</sup> Mentioned in the fifth and sixth-century Code of Justinian, these "brothers" – in many different forms over the centuries – had taught essentially the same doctrines and practiced the same form of adult baptism. To support Keller's contentions, the author quoted from Samuel Cramer's article in the 1903 edition of the *Real-Encyclopedie für protestantische Theologie* (Encyclopedia of Protestant Theology) and Adolf von Harnack's *History of Dogma*, vol. III. Although the Russian Mennonites may not have been the only ones to have seen the favorable implications of Keller's studies for the Mennonites, they were the only ones who employed his interpretation in their attempts to change their government's public policies.

When the Mennonite General Conference, meeting in Nikolaipol on 17-19 October, 1912, decided to produce a pamphlet on the sect/confession quarrel for distribution to Duma representatives, the above 1910 document was incorporated virtually verbatim as chapter 1. The recommendation to produce such a document was made by David H. Epp at the conference as chair of the *KfK*. Since this 1912 document and that of 1910 are so similar in content to Epp's 1897 "Origins" addendum to his *Catechism*, it is probably safe to conclude that he wrote both the 1910 document and its replication as chapter 1 of the 1912 tract.

Chapter 2 of the 1912 document entitled: "Migration of the Mennonites into Russia," was in all likelihood also written by Epp. It contains copies of documents such as Catherine the Great's 1763 Manifesto, Paul's great *Privilegium*, and numerous references to laws concerning Mennonites. Also included is the 1908 "The Mennonite Position on the Issue of Propaganda and Religious Freedom" and a series of "explanatory notes" that contain numerous references to Russian laws and the issue of nonresistance; even the 1873 letter to the Russian government by Mennonite leaders concerning their military exemption, as well as documents relating to the eventual resolution of the problem, are included. The document therefore indicates that Russian Mennonites believed the sect/confession conflict to have become intimately tied to their military exemption.<sup>90</sup>

Keller's interpretation of Anabaptist/Mennonite origins also stands at the very outset of Peter Braun's *Kto takie Mennonity*. Braun's approach is somewhat different, however. The title to chapter 1: "The

Origin of Mennonite Doctrine," already indicates this. Braun nevertheless makes the same distinction between *Taufgesinnte* and *Wiedertäufer* as had earlier writers, and declares that Menno, upon his conversion, joined the former who had "already [been] well-known in the Netherlands for some time." Indeed, Braun introduces his first chapter with the story of Menno and concludes it by saying,

As the above makes clear, Menno was not the founder – in the essential sense of the term – of a new doctrine. Rather, his contribution consists in the fact that he organized and united those groups [the *Taufgesinnte*] into congregations with a strict discipline "who baptized upon a confession of faith" and had already been in existence for a long time; not all of these, however, only those who were to be found in northern lands. The congregations that had been formed in South Germany and the Swiss lands remained virtually untouched by his activity. In his many writings he interpreted and successfully defended their teachings. The teachings themselves, however, had existed long before Menno.<sup>91</sup>

Braun then traced the origin of the teachings held by the *Taufgesinnte* back to the pre-Constantinian transformation of the Church with its resulting worldliness and corruption of the clergy. Relying upon Keller, he sought to establish the continuity of these teachings with those of the Waldenses. Having done so, he stated: "The question therefore is: are the later Mennonites – the followers of this doctrine of baptism upon confession of faith – the heirs of the ancient Waldenses?" Before he answered his own question, however, Braun observed that it had first to be "determined that the Mennonites, as a church, had no connections whatsoever either to the sect of Thomas Müntzer or with the Münsterite Anabaptists." Braun sought to separate Menno from the Münster Anabaptists for the same reason others before him had: first, he wished to deny that Mennonites were a sect; secondly, he wanted to assert the legitimacy of the Mennonite claim to be non-violent.

As these events were unfolding in Russia, the relationship between Menno and the Münsterites began to undergo a reassessment in the Dutch and German Mennonite presses, a reassessment that coincided with an emerging attack on Keller's interpretation (and that of C. H. Wedel) in the *Mennonitische Blätter*.<sup>92</sup> As early as 1903, before even the fourth volume of Wedel's study had been published, Hinrich van der Smitten, editor of the *Mennonitische Blätter*, wrote a critical review of the previously published three volumes. At the very outset of that review, van der Smitten remarked:

The author declares, in his preface to the first volume, that his work was, in the first instance, to serve as a primer for his oral instruction in Mennonite history. He therefore placed himself decisively on the side of Archival Privy Coun-

selor Dr. L. Keller. Waldensianism and Anabaptism are, according to the author, interchangeable concepts. Menno, he seems to think, was least influenced by the Waldenses, "to the great detriment of the movement he established" (III, 148). I would like to recommend that the author take into consideration for any future revision of his book Professor Cramer's articles on Menno and the Mennonites in the new edition of Herzog's Realencyclopedia, a discussion of which Br. Mannhardt begins in this very issue of the "Menn. Bl." The author has made his work just a little too easy. He has hardly touched on the rise of Anabaptism in the Harz, Thuringia, and Hesse, and therefore divides the development of our forefathers into a Swiss, South German, and Dutch phase. I am well aware of the great difficulties entailed in trying to comprehend and depict in a meaningful way the large area and the diverse intellectual streams of the whole . . .<sup>93</sup>

Only three years after the "Haake Affair," Hinrich van der Smissen, editor of the most important scholarly Mennonite periodical in Germany, implicitly rejected Keller's interpretation.

Another three years later, a second review – this one of Ernst Weydmann's *History of the Mennonites* – appeared in the pages of the *Mennonitische Blätter*: it was written by the rising young Reformation scholar, Walter Koehler.<sup>94</sup> Weydmann, Mennonite pastor in Krefeld and a long time Keller partisan, drew Koehler's criticism upon himself not only for his own scholarly shortcomings, but also for those of Keller. Koehler wrote:

. . . Absent in Weydmann's work is any evaluation of the most recent literature or its [methodological] approaches; in contrast, there is a decided surrender to old and endearing imaginations. The excellent articles by Hegler in the third edition of the Protestant Realencyclopädie on select Anabaptists (Denck, Hoffmann, etc.), for example, have not been consulted. ***Had he done so, he would not have been able to deny the influence of Melchior Hoffmann on the Münsterite movement*** [my emphasis]. Weydmann clings to a crushed and broken Hoffmann; his importance, however, lies in the violence-preaching radicals. ***And should not the "old evangelical congregational" ancestry finally be removed from Mennonite history*** [my emphasis]? Without attempting to detract from the considerable merits of Ludwig Keller on behalf of Anabaptist history – he provided the incentive for its renewed investigation – his theory about the Anabaptists being heirs of the "old evangelical congregations" of the Middle Ages has not stood the test in the forum of history. The entire introductory section of Weydmann's book with its appeal to the Waldenses, Paulicians, and whatever else they may be called, has nothing whatever to do with Mennonite history. At best one may have analogies here which demonstrate that opposition to churchdom and (ecclesiastical) hierarchies has always been alive and well in Christianity because people never completely forgot that the founder of Christianity eschewed both phenomena. But the church and the hierarchy attacked by the reformers of the Middle Ages are completely different entities from those attacked by the Anabaptists – as surely as the papacy and the Lutheran territorial church are different. Anabaptism must be evaluated as a movement original to the Reformation period.<sup>95</sup>

Koehler's review should have been of critical importance especially to Russian Mennonites for it addressed the two areas of their history that were to become pivotal to them later on: Menno's relationship to Münster in particular and to revolution in general; and Keller's "old evangelical congregational" theory that traced their lineage back to apostolic times. But because of the political struggles with the government they were enmeshed in, Russian Mennonites refused to come to grips with either of these problem areas, continuing instead to defend positions that were coming increasingly under scholarly attack. The case against Keller was the more compelling of the two, but even long-held Mennonite assumptions regarding Menno's relationship to Münster were beginning to be questioned by Mennonite scholars. The two, of course, were related for if Keller's theory was in error and the Mennonites were not a pivotal link in the great chain of Apostolic Christianity, then the Russian Mennonites' response to the Russian government's "sectarian" argument would have to be revised, as would Menno's relationship to the Münsterites.

The questioning of Menno's relationship to the Münsterites began with Samuel Cramer's article on Menno in volume XII of Hauck's *Theologische Realencyclopädie* (Encyclopedia of Theology) where the author observed that Menno, in the first edition of his *Fundament-boek*, had stated that Münsterite Anabaptists "had only erred a little." In the March 1905 issue of the *Mennonitische Blätter*, the editor, Hinrich van der Smitten, wrote:

It has been firmly established that the so-called Anabaptist uprising in Münster constitutes a dark chapter in our history. Those Anabaptists had connections to the community we call Mennonite after Menno. They came directly out of those circles which, according to L. Keller, were devoted to the old evangelical movement; an unhealthy outgrowth (to be sure), against whose teachings and excesses the heart and majority of our fellowship were decisively opposed.

Van der Smitten sought to soften the impact of his statement by rejecting as false opponents' argument that Mennonites were the direct descendants of the Münsterites. Not so, he asserted, for the latter "are rotten fruit on the tree of the Baptist (Täufer) movement." Nevertheless, he labeled as mistaken an earlier Mennonite contention that there was absolutely no connection between the two. And he concluded:

Since the middle of the last century we have no longer been able to close our eyes to the fact that those people [the Münsterites] were our children, even though depraved children. The deceased Professor de Hoop-Scheffer in Amsterdam has indisputably established this fact. No matter how difficult it may be for us, we may not – if we wish to be honest – divorce ourselves entirely from the revolutionaries in Münster.<sup>96</sup>

Though Russian Mennonite leaders must surely have been reading the *Mennonitische Blätter*, neither the pages of *Der Botschafter* nor those of the *Friedensstimme* so much as mentioned this “anti-Keller Münsterite” scholarship. Nevertheless, the 2 February, 1911, issue of the latter paper did carry John Horsch’s rejection of Cramer’s argument in an article entitled: “Menno Simon’s Relationship to the Münsterite Sect.”<sup>97</sup> In it, Horsch sought to demonstrate that Cramer’s “sensation causing” quotation from Menno did not refer to the Münsterites, but to the somewhat more peaceable Melchiorites. It was not a successful defense; but for the Russian Mennonites it appears to have been enough.<sup>98</sup> Then, as though to confirm this “inside” position with that of an “impartial outsider,” the *Friedensstimme* published, in its 20 July, 1911, issue an essay that had already appeared in the *St. Petersburg Zeitung* as far back as 1908.<sup>99</sup> With respect to the above controversy the essay observed:

The origin of the Mennonites is to be sought in the time of the Reformation. That they arose out of the Münsterite Anabaptists is a delusion. The two movements ran parallel to one another. Frisia, Holland, Westphalia, the Rhine region, and Switzerland are the places where the Mennonites first – and simultaneously – appeared.

And a little later the Keller thesis even made an appearance, though in a somewhat obscured manner:

. . . Their distinctive teachings of adult baptism, the believers’ church, rejection of the oath, military service, and transubstantiation originated in the early Church and continued, demonstrably, until the time of the Reformation, even if only in a latent manner.<sup>100</sup>

Once again, therefore, although doubts had arisen even amongst European Mennonites about both Keller’s theory and Menno’s relationship to the Münster revolutionaries, there were other Mennonite scholars (notably John Horsch in America and the anonymous author of the article in the *St. Petersburg Zeitung*) who continued to defend and promulgate the established interpretations that were so important to the Russian Mennonites.

The name of Thomas Müntzer had never been brought up in these discussions. But it was in Peter Braun’s pamphlet. Why should Braun have been different? Müntzer had no connection to Menno or to the Münsterites, having lived in Thuringia. Epp never mentioned his name in his 1897 “Brief Summary,” the 1910 “History of Mennonite Origins,” or the version of the latter incorporated as chapter 1 of the 1912 *Mennonites in Russia*. If Epp could avoid mentioning Müntzer, why could not Braun? The answer may well lie in the fact that Braun had read



Klaus' *Unsere Kolonien* carefully and cited it repeatedly. As he did so, he could not avoid noting Klaus' affinity for Zimmermann's interpretation. It was possible that Russian governmental officials also knew of it. Therefore Klaus' interpretation had at the very least to be challenged, if not rejected outright. Braun could not simply ignore it like everyone else. He had somehow to discredit it; and to do so he once again reached for the Keller thesis with its pacifistic *Taufgesinnte* succession going back to the primitive church, and its upstart counterpart in the Münster *Wiedertäufer*. But he did not stop there. Arguing from the perspective of intellectual history, he observed:

The entire Mennonite historical past, as well as the very spirit of their teachings, speaks against such a connection. That teaching, in contrast to the teachings of the Anabaptists (Wiedertäufer), manifests a purely religious character: Menno Simons totally rejected any military [warlike] or political involvement of the church, something both Thomas Müntzer and Jan van Leyden advocated. As proof of the fact that neither Menno nor his friends ever shared the *insane teachings of these sects* [my emphasis], I quote the following passage from Menno's writings: "I can fearlessly challenge anybody that none under heaven can truthfully show that I ever agreed with the teachings of the Münsterites. From the beginning until the present moment, in all more than seventeen years, I have opposed them in every way both covertly and openly, orally as well as in writing. We do not recognize anyone as our brothers and sisters who – like the Münsterites – have rejected the cross of Christ, who despise the Word of God, and who, under the guise of the fear of God, indulge the passions of this world." According to the teachings of Menno Simons, the Bible must be considered the sole rule of faith and life. For this reason he describes, in another passage, the teachings of the Münsterites as a heresy "far removed from the spirit, teaching and example of Christ" ("verre van Christi Geest, Woort ende Voorbeeld").

Many similar statements could be culled from the writings of Menno Simons. He even wrote *entire treatises against such hated and false teachings* [my emphasis]. Dirk Philips, Menno's main co-worker and the most highly educated among the early Mennonites, did the same, writing against the Münsterites as early as 1536. *It was only their ignorance of the true circumstances or open hostility that caused the historians and polemicists of the 16<sup>th</sup> century – as well as those of later times – to portray the congregations "baptizing upon a confession of faith" as a new sect that had originated in the revolutionary movements of the time, and to call them "Wiedertäufer" or "Anabaptists," in order to raise suspicion about them from the very outset* [my emphasis].

There can be no doubt – and this is confirmed by the best church historians – that the reason why Mennonites were originally confused with the Münsterites lies chiefly in the fact that they, like the Münsterites, rejected infant baptism. It should be apparent that such a reason does not deserve serious consideration.

On the other hand, the connection between the Mennonites and the Waldenses is proven above all by the fact that the most important leaders in their midst came from the Waldenses; this also explains why large congregations of those "baptizing upon confession of faith" arose so quickly in the chief centers of Waldensianism. Such leaders were: Hans Denck, Ludwig Hätzer, Hans Langenmantel, Hans Koch, Spittelmeyer and others.

Furthermore, Mennonite confessions are so similar to those of the earlier groups that “baptized upon a confession of faith” – that is, the Waldenses and their precursors – that this has to be seen as a powerful testimony to the inner connections between them. The congregational organization, the Mennonite character and traditions are so reminiscent of the Waldenses that the great historian Mosheim declared forthrightly: “The Waldenses lived in the manner and style of the current Mennonites.” Many other researchers and historians (Keller, Haupt, Müller, Wedel, Friesen [!], and others) recognize the Mennonite right to regard themselves as the spiritual descendants of the Waldenses.<sup>101</sup>

Although approached more explicitly from the perspective of the history of ideas than other Russian Mennonite writers, this passage from Peter Braun’s *Kto takie Mennonity* exemplifies many of the themes we have touched upon in this chapter. First and foremost is Braun’s central reliance on Keller’s interpretation of Anabaptism and the Reformation. This reliance is maintained in the face of serious and sustained challenges to Keller’s scholarship, challenges the Russian Mennonites were fully aware of. The interpretation, however, was so central to their political concerns that they were loath to give it up. Secondly, Braun appears to have been the only one to have sought to separate the *Taufgesinnte/Mennonites* from Thomas Müntzer, although even he – who cites Klaus frequently (pp. 7, 9, 14, 20, 32) – does not do so in connection with Klaus’ argument. Nor does Braun know enough about the Müntzer/Anabaptist relationship to refute the Zimmermann interpretation effectively. Thirdly, Braun is clearly also concerned to refute the charge that Mennonites constitute a sect. It is for this reason that Keller’s interpretation is so important to him, for it allows him to assert that those who “baptized upon a confession of faith” existed prior to the Reformation. The peaceful *Taufgesinnte* lineage into which they placed Menno therefore went back into Christian antiquity, well before Thomas Müntzer and the Münsterites appeared on the horizon. Because of this, it was logically impossible for Menno to be the founder of a new church; at best he could only have “reformed” an older, now weakened *Taufgesinnte* tradition that was in danger of being swallowed by the revolutionary movements of the sixteenth century. That this interpretation had great utility in defense of the privileges they enjoyed in Russia will become fully apparent in subsequent chapters.

Keller’s interpretation was not employed by David H. Epp and H. A. Bergmann in their 1915 Petrograd document, however. The latter, directed as it was against the land liquidation laws, had a much more limited objective to which the above thesis became irrelevant. For in it, Mennonites were concerned to prove their “Dutch” ancestry in order to be excluded from the “German” colonists targeted by the law. Although it too was entitled, “The Question of Mennonite Origins,” it

contained none of the other arguments associated thus far with tracts and pamphlets dealing with that topic. This would appear to be yet another indication that Braun's pamphlet addressed many more issues than simply the land liquidation question.

There are several other matters that still need to be addressed in this chapter. In the preceding chapter we argued that the incentive to create a Russian Mennonite archive had had very practical components to it. The case was made in the "Archive Circular" where the authors talked about the Russian Mennonites' often futile search for documents with which to defend their rights and privileges against the government's repeated attempts to undermine or withdraw them. That same circular, however, also spoke of the necessity of an archive for the promotion of scholarly research into Mennonite history, one assumes for the average Russian Mennonite a less persuasive argument than the practical one. Nonetheless, the circular stated:

*Scholarly*, to the extent that Mennonite historical research would be powerfully advanced through the presence of such an archive: we – and already our forefathers – have been guilty of consciously neglecting our history; we have not taken seriously the Lord's admonition to the Israelites to make known to our children and their descendants the history of our ancestors, and the sad consequence of this is not only an astonishing and unforgivable ignorance of our own history, but an actual conscious disregard for it. We encounter such a disregard at every turn. Over the years we have become accustomed to an unhistorical mode of thinking which, in most instances, never gets beyond our own personal experiences and recollections. In this connection we need to recall what Lic. Theol. Benj. Unruh wrote in No. 91 of the 1909 *Botschafter* about the overriding importance of historical research. [And then follows, yet once again, the famous quote.]<sup>102</sup>

As it turned out, such research was hardly possible any longer among the Mennonites of Russia. But it had begun in the work of some of their students who had left to study in German universities. There was, first of all, Theodor Ediger's 1911 doctoral dissertation on Russian relations to Germany, France, and the Papacy during the early Middle Ages. But there was also another, written by Cornelius Bergmann in 1916 for the University of Leipzig, on Anabaptist/Mennonite history. It was entitled: *The Anabaptist Movement in the Zurich Canton to 1600*,<sup>103</sup> in many ways a pioneering work based largely on original sources drawn from the Zurich archives. Although not primarily interested in the question of origins – probably because he had been removed from the Russian scene for some time – Bergmann did address that issue in his first chapter. There he spoke of two scholarly approaches to the problem: the first was Keller's approach which concentrated on the continuities between the Reformation and groups like the Waldenses, Lollards,

Beghards, Picards and Brothers of the Common Life. This approach laid little emphasis upon confessions of faith, duly appointed clerics, sacraments and the like, stressing as it did vertical relationships. In support of Keller's thesis, Bergmann cited some recent works, among them those of Harnack, the 1529 Imperial Edict against the Anabaptists, and a few sixteenth century chronicles. The second approach laid more emphasis on the horizontal relationships resulting from Luther's revolt against the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century and was based upon a common Bible, but read differently.

Bergmann then proceeded to stress the material conditions within which the Reformation in general and Anabaptism in particular had emerged. Referring, among others, to the work of Ernst Troeltsch, Bergmann argued that the abuses in the material realm created a fertile soil for the reception of new ideas which also explained the sometimes revolutionary origins of Anabaptism. Only with time and the progressive study of the Bible, did a thoroughly religious Anabaptist movement arise from this soil. He therefore argued:

If one takes these conditions into account, then the connection between Anabaptism and the development of these general conditions becomes clearer. Anabaptism was lodged in these contemporary developments, to a large extent initially grew out of them, and only gradually developed a more purified religious worldview, which she owed to Biblicism. This connection allows Anabaptism to become an essential aspect of the time.<sup>104</sup>

Bergmann did not categorically reject Keller's interpretation, but he clearly preferred the second approach. Nor did he indicate the extent to which or the reasons why Keller had become so important to the Russian Mennonites. Or what the consequences of a rejection of Keller's interpretation might be for the arguments employed in the defense of their privileges. He may not have known. Yet here, in this scholarly context, one could deal with Keller and the question of Anabaptist origins very differently from the way in which his brothers were treating it at home.

One other Russian Mennonite dealt with the issue of Anabaptism and revolution; that was Benjamin H. Unruh himself, but only in 1925. His perspective was therefore colored by the revolutionary events in Russia after 1917.<sup>105</sup> In the essay, Unruh dealt primarily with the German Peasant War, its antecedents and connections to the Reformation. And he reached some, for his time, rather startling conclusions, for he argued that Luther and the Anabaptists had had much more in common than Luther partisans had been willing to concede.<sup>106</sup> It had been the specter of Thomas Müntzer that had kept them from taking notice of this fact.<sup>107</sup> But though Unruh's interest in the topic of Anabaptism and revolution

may have germinated on Ukrainian soil, and been watered by the events of 1917 and their communist aftermath, there were no references in the piece that would remind the reader of the issues that had concerned his brothers only a decade and a few years earlier.

These scholarly aberrations aside, the extent to which Keller's historical views had seeped into the Russian Mennonite environment may be seen in the writings of two other outsiders, both more scholarly than the one who wrote the piece in the St. Petersburg newspaper. The first of these was Karl Lindemann whom we will yet meet in a number of other contexts; the other was Adolf Ehrt, whose work on the Russian Mennonites appeared in 1932 and was reviewed in the pages of the *Mennonitische Blätter* by Peter Braun himself. In his *Concerning the German Colonists in Russia: Results of a Research Trip 1919-1921*, Lindemann wrote:

Some historians believe that the origin of the Mennonite congregations has to be placed in very ancient times (so the archivist L. Keller). In their fundamental beliefs and the foundations of their social institutions there are elements that remind us of the goals of the earliest Christian congregations. The old sects of the Novatians, Priscilians, Paulicians, Bogomils, Cathars and Waldenses (of the 12<sup>th</sup> century) are supposed to have been the forerunners of the Mennonites, whose contemporary confession of faith reached its final form in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and that in Holland under the leadership of the great organizer, Menno Simons.<sup>108</sup>

Even Adolf Ehrt wrote in 1932:

... It cannot be conclusively established whether, and to what extent, the 16<sup>th</sup> century Anabaptists traced their ancestry back to the Waldensian and Hutterite congregations, as Keller asserts and Kawerau, Harnack, Lüdemann and others repeat. Perhaps they are rather to be considered an intellectual movement to be found in all historical epochs that was modified by the specific conditions of their time. There can be little doubt that the soil in the Netherlands was prepared for them by older evangelical movements. ...<sup>109</sup>

If these two scholars could proffer such a modified version of the argument – though perhaps under the influence of the Russian Mennonite documents they used – it should not surprise us to see that Keller's view of Anabaptist/Mennonite origins could gain such a powerful and widespread foothold in the Russian Mennonite consciousness, a foothold that remained with them long after they had left Russian soil and the issues that had concerned them there. That they continued to propound and defend Keller's theory long after they had come to Canada and elsewhere in the 1920s can be seen in the articles published (and unpublished) by B. B. Janz later on in Canada. In one of these, entitled: "The Origin of the Russian Mennonites," he wrote:

Therefore, we as Mennonites are, both in blood and spirit, the heirs of the Waldenses, Bohemian Brethren, South German and Swiss, and (according to bloodline) overwhelmingly of the Dutch *Taufgesinnte*, of which the latter were the first to receive the name of Mennonite.<sup>110</sup>

In another entitled: "The Origin and Wanderings of the Mennonites," written by H. H. Kornelsen, a similar interpretation is given.<sup>111</sup> Even J. B. Toews, long after he had left Russia and been exposed to newer interpretations of Anabaptist origins, continued unconsciously to give expression to this interpretation.<sup>112</sup> The theory had been so deeply engrained in the Russian Mennonite psyche, perhaps because of the role it played in the defense of their privileges, that it nearly became an article of faith rather than an historical interpretation.

But we must now turn to the application of this theory, among other matters, to the public policy issues that were to concern the Russian Mennonites from 1908 to 1917. In this regard, the next chapter will demonstrate that David H. Epp wrote virtually all of the documents Russian Mennonites employed in their quarrel with the government in the sect/confession conflict. But it was Peter Braun who wrote the principal documents used in the battle to oppose the government's land liquidation policies. The latter documents will be treated in Part III. As we have already argued, Keller's interpretation of Anabaptist/Mennonite origins played a critical role in all of these documents.

Anabaptists and Mennonites had, since the time of the Reformation, periodically attempted to influence government policies in their favor. Indeed, as Peter P. Klassen has written: "In fact, the history of the Mennonites is a history of struggles and negotiations with their respective secular governments, governmental demands, and the struggle by the congregations to get special privileges or legal rights."<sup>113</sup> Would Keller's interpretation help the Russian Mennonites in this struggle?

## PART II

---

# **Religious Minorities and the Orthodox State:**

Mennonites and the Politics  
of Religion after the  
April/October Manifestos





## “Nowhere do Heterodox Religions Enjoy so Perfect a Liberty as in Russia”

*The Mennonite Church is not, however, an illegitimate branch of any church or church fellowship . . . As proof of the fact that our church is not a branch of some now existing church, as many have assumed to this point, but in contrast has the right to be recognized as an historically independent body, we can now present irrefutable factual evidence, on the basis of which we can, without fear of exaggeration, assert the following: the Christian tradition to which Mennonites adhere, existed in the Universal Christian Church earlier than the Lutheran or Reformed Churches, as has been proven by the historian Dr. L. Keller . . .*

*– David H. Epp, Concerning the History of the Origin of the Mennonites*

**A**mong the rights and privileges granted Mennonites upon their entry into Russia in 1789 was a *limited religious toleration*. In this regard the great *Privilegium* of 1800 stated that Mennonites were to be allowed “to follow their faith and church practices unhindered” for all time. *Complete religious freedom*, however, was enjoyed only by the Russian Orthodox Church as the state-protected, established *national* church.<sup>1</sup> It alone, therefore, had the exclusive right to proselytize. Nonetheless, the “confessional” status accorded the Mennonites in Russia gave them legitimacy as a non-Orthodox church. Though not without limitations or governmental oversight, it raised them well above the status of sect they had held in Western Europe, not to speak of the illegal Russian sects that had broken with the Russian Orthodox Church. Until 1836 the Bureau of Guardianship (in 1818 renamed the Guardians’ Committee) exercised such oversight; after 1836, the latter committee came under the supervision of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, with the churches of foreign origin coming under the specific purview of the ministry’s Department of Religious Affairs.<sup>2</sup> As Paul W. Werth observes, “Although this new administration undoubtedly created the possibility – indeed, perhaps the necessity – of deeper state intervention in non-Orthodox religious affairs, it also signified official recognition of the confessions in question.”<sup>3</sup> It further-

more placed the confessions under secular rather than religious or Church supervision, thus setting up a wall of separation between the foreign confessions and the Orthodox Church.

The 17 April and 17 October, 1905 manifestos brought changes into these relationships, or at least appeared to do so. The first extended toleration to all religious groups in Russia, including the sects of the Orthodox Church;<sup>4</sup> the second promised complete religious freedom to everyone. In granting the latter, Nicholas II and his ministers seemed to be leveling Russia's religious playing field by extending the right of religious proselytism and choice of church membership to everyone. However, these decrees did not abrogate the Orthodox Church's unique and privileged position in the realm; no separation of Church and State was created by the manifestos.<sup>5</sup> When, therefore, the Council of Ministers, whose religious policy was embedded in the manifestos, introduced enabling legislation in the newly created Duma to implement the freedoms promised in the manifestos, the Orthodox Church opposed the government's bills with a tenacity that eventually forced their withdrawal. This meant that Mennonites as well as the Russian sects, who immediately sought to take advantage of the freedoms promised in the manifestos, soon found themselves in a kind of religious no-man's land, having been promised complete religious freedom but not having had it enacted into positive law. At first this only created confusion; later, however, apprehension. It also led the Mennonites, at nearly every turn, to attempt to influence the formulation of government policy on religious matters that might affect them in the future.

At the heart of the growing tension lay the question of religious proselytism and whether in this governmentally proclaimed new era of religious freedom, the Mennonites should continue to be considered a confession or should instead now be considered a sect. The two issues were not unrelated, for the conflict was triggered by the Mennonite Brethren's (the 1860 "sectarian" branch of the Russian Mennonite Church) post-1905 "infringement" of the Orthodox Church's exclusive right to proselytize, and her relationship to the (at least from the Orthodox Church's point of view) "sectarian" *Stundo-Baptists* and Evangelical Christians. This emerging conflict had a history, and it is to this history that we must now turn in order better to understand what happened.

From 1589 to the promulgation of Peter the Great's *Ecclesiastical Regulation* of 1720, the Russian Orthodox Church had been ruled by the Patriarch of Moscow who thought of himself as the religious counterpart of the Tsar, and the Church as independent and free from State control. Peter's *Ecclesiastical Regulation* transformed this relationship by establishing what shortly came to be called "The Most Holy Synod" to govern the Church under the direction of a secular "Over Procurator"

(a term borrowed from the German) appointed by, and subject to, the Tsar. By 1824 this Holy Synod had become a kind of department of religion with the Over Procurator receiving the status of minister and joining the Tsar's Council of Ministers. Until 1905 the Council of Ministers was presided over by the Tsar himself, to whom each minister was responsible for the conduct of his agency. The older literature on the Orthodox Church argued that Peter's *Ecclesiastical Regulation* had marked the end of the Church's independence.<sup>6</sup> But this interpretation has recently been called into question by G. L. Freeze, who writes:

Most important of all, *the Church preserved until 1917 its special status* – as an institution parallel to, not inside, the state apparatus. Although the Church's political clout and specific sphere of authority declined in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it retained its basic structural apparatus as a special 'ecclesiastical' domain. Above all, *that meant a monopoly over the spiritual affairs of Orthodox citizens*, a realm of activity that embraced liturgy, missions, education and religious thought . . . It is important to recognize how parallel the Church was, its various organs literally duplicating and formally separating it from similar offices of the state. Thus, the Church had its own censorship apparatus (empowered to supervise all writings on faith, Church and clergy), its own ecclesiastical courts (responsible for most affairs of the clergy and *for the religious affairs of Orthodox laymen* [heresy], and its own bureaucracy (to assist bishops and various administrative organs) . . . [my emphasis].

The government's policy vis-à-vis the Church, Freeze contends, was to separate the "sacred" from the "profane" realms and "delimit the Church's involvement in strictly secular affairs" as much as possible.<sup>7</sup> But in the realm of the "sacred," the Church's power remained supreme except for its lack of control over the confessions of the foreign colonists; unless, of course, these confessions transgressed into the arena of the Church's prerogatives.

The toleration of these "heretical" foreign faiths in Russia began even before the age of the Reformation. In the latter period some Catholic cities in Western Europe like Venice, Antwerp and Amsterdam (major trading centers of the time) refused to allow religious conflict to interfere with their trade and commerce. To avoid religious confrontation as much as possible in a religiously divided world, foreign merchants of alien faiths were permitted to reside only in certain enclaves of the city where they could be isolated but still be allowed to practice their religion unhindered. To a degree, foreign merchants had already been so sequestered in Western European cities even before the Reformation; the Protestant revolt against the Roman Catholic Church merely added a new, though important dimension to the problem. According to Dimitrij Tschizewskij, the same was true in Russia. He writes:

As early as the thirteenth century German merchants and craftsmen were invited to come to Vladimir (Volynia). There were factories of the Hansa in Novgorod and Pskov, and in these cities foreigners had their own churches [the Germans then being Catholic rather than Orthodox in their faith]. Although non-Russians were legally prohibited from participating in the community life of the cities, the citizens at least had the opportunity to see foreigners and to realize that 'Germans' – *nemets*, as all Western Europeans were called – were human beings just like the Slavs.<sup>8</sup>

Such a "German suburb" existed in St. Petersburg at the time of Peter the Great. The fact that the Germans then living there were predominantly Lutherans may even have been an advantage, at least insofar as the Tsar was concerned. For Peter enjoyed their company and frequented their enclave.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, in a manifesto of April, 1708 he proclaimed that "here in Our Capital freedom of worship has already been introduced for all faiths . . . ." But there was one exception. Everyone was to be tolerated except "the Christian sects separated from our church."<sup>10</sup> The latter remained under the jurisdiction and periodic persecution of the Orthodox Church; the former, however, were granted toleration and legal status as independent confessions totally outside the jurisdiction of the Church under Catherine the Great. That these foreign faiths had broken with the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century was not of great concern either to the Russian ruler or the Orthodox Church, since the latter had itself been in nearly constant conflict over the centuries with the Catholic Church.<sup>11</sup>

Reinhard Wittram was therefore probably right when he argued that Peter's policy of extending religious toleration to non-Orthodox West Europeans was the continuation of a *de facto* policy in effect in Moscow at least since the sixteenth century.<sup>12</sup> It was this tradition and Catherine's not very profound conversion from Lutheranism to Orthodoxy<sup>13</sup> that allowed her to extend religious toleration to the Mennonites in 1789, even though the Orthodox Church may not have favored it. Patriarch Joachim, who died in 1690, for example, railed against such "foreign heretics" in his testament, declaring, "They do not share with us Christians the true Orthodox faith, are not in harmony with our national customs and are strangers to our Mother the Orthodox Church."<sup>14</sup> And Tschizewskij observes more generally:

For a Moscovite of the time, every foreigner was a dangerous 'infidel'. For a person who had grown up in the tradition of 'ritual Christianity' the essence of religion consisted in those external forms he took to be the substance of Christian doctrine, but foreigners – most of them Protestants, at that – had quite different churches, they did not worship icons, they crossed themselves differently or not at all, they did not fast, or they ate butter and eggs on fast days. Clearly people who behaved in such a manner were 'heretical,' non-Christian, or even 'godless.'<sup>15</sup>

Since it was Peter's, and later Catherine's, policy to invite foreigners of non-Orthodox faith into the realm,<sup>16</sup> the Church felt compelled to protect its flock from being infected by the cancer of heresy. To that end foreigners were isolated as much as possible in specific areas of the cities, settled in ethno-religious enclaves, and forbidden to proselytize among the Orthodox.<sup>17</sup> Even those living in the cities, though they gradually became fluent in the Russian language, were not allowed to have their sermons preached in the Russian language, but only in their native tongues so as not to attract Orthodox believers.

The Orthodox Church would therefore have preferred to have kept alien 'heretical' intellectuals, colonists and other assorted foreigners out of the country; the State, however, deemed them a scientific and economic necessity. With respect to these foreigners, therefore, the two entities were at least to a degree in conflict. But certain events, beginning with the more conservative reign of Nicholas I in 1825, conspired to modify the State's position and bring it more into line with that of the Church. The first of these was the revolt of December 1825, known as the "Decembrist uprising" under "dangerous Western influences." Shortly on its heels followed the 1830 Polish uprising against Russian control. Inspired by the French Revolution of the same year, it too pointed to the baleful influences reaching into Russia by way of its borderlands from the West. These "Western" revolutionary ideas threatened the State;<sup>18</sup> and the 'heretical' Western Protestant ideas of the colonists threatened the Church.

Beginning on 27 February, 1835,<sup>19</sup> therefore, the St. Petersburg government prohibited "the entry of poor, impoverished foreigners" into the country. Two years later the Guardianship Committee for Foreign Settlers was absorbed by the Ministry of State Domains, with its staff greatly diminished and its local offices closed within the year. Local governors, who were much more strongly influenced by local sentiment and concerns, took over much of its former supervision of the colonies.

It was not enough for the Church and State merely to oppose this 'disintegrating' Western influence; to counteract it something positive had to be raised in its place, something authentically Russian, an identity around which Russians could rally. Such a rallying point was in fact provided by Serge Uvarov, the Minister of Education, who wrote in 1833:

... Our common obligation consists in this: that the education of the people be conducted in the joint spirit of Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality . . . In the midst of the rapid collapse in Europe of religious and civil institutions, at the time of a general spread of 'destructive ideas,' at the sight of grievous phenomena surrounding us on all sides, it is necessary to establish our fatherland on firm foundations upon which is based the wellbeing, strength and life of a people. It is necessary to find the principles which form the distinctive

character of Russia; it is necessary to gather into one whole the sacred remnants of Russian nationality and to fasten to them the anchor of our salvation . . . .<sup>20</sup>

As we shall note in what follows, Uvarov's attempt to counteract the 'destructive' Western influence through the creation of an authentic Russian identity, consisting of the inseparable pillars of Orthodox faith, autocratic rule and Russian ethnicity, was to bear a rich harvest among conservative Russian Nationalists and leaders of the Orthodox Church.

The policy pursued by the Russian government with regard to its non-Orthodox foreign settlers and colonists, during the reign of Alexander I, appears to have been transferred to the Russian sectarians who had broken with the Orthodox Church. Although Nicholas Breyfogle, in his 1998 dissertation on the settlement of religious sectarians in the Transcaucasus does not draw the parallel, he does observe: "During this period [the nineteenth century], tsarist officials promoted the relocation of sectarians (Dukhobors, Molokans, and Stubbotnicks) to Transcaucasia – to the exclusion of other Slavs – in an effort to isolate their 'heretical infection' from Orthodox Russians."<sup>21</sup> Breyfogle calls this a policy of "toleration through isolation" by means of which sectarians were often forcibly relocated to outlying regions of the empire, populated, if at all, by people of alien tongues; regions that were often inhospitable to large-scale human habitation because of climate or nomadic and uncivilized tribes. Enshrined in a ukase of 1830, the very year of the Polish Revolution, the policy led to the relocation of both Dukhobors and Molokans, first to the Molotschna regions at virtually the same time the Mennonites first settled there, and later to Transcaucasia and greater isolation when it became apparent that neither group had stopped proselytizing among the Orthodox.

In Transcaucasia the sectarians, often under the most adverse conditions, gradually established themselves as excellent colonizers and, even in the midst of an alien population, as loyal Russian subjects. Over time, government officials became persuaded that these sectarians were not a politically subversive element in the body politic, and their opinion of them changed. They came to the conclusion that a policy of religious toleration would better serve the empire than the one they had been pursuing. Perhaps these experiences played a role in the development of Witte's and his Council of Ministers' policies of religious toleration embedded in the 1905 manifestos, policies that put the ministers in conflict with Pobedonostsev and the more reactionary elements within the Orthodox Church.

To a certain extent, the Russian Orthodox Church's original opposition to the government's policies grew out of its view of itself as the "third Rome," and the belief that ethnicity and religion were inextrica-

bly linked: that is, that being Russian and Orthodox belonged together.<sup>22</sup> The belief that religious Moscow constituted the third Rome was apparently first enunciated by Philotheus of the Eleazer monastery in Pskov to Vassily III in a letter of 1511 where the churchman wrote:

The church of ancient Rome fell because of the Appolinarian heresy [essentially diminishing or denying outright the humanity of Christ], as to the second Rome – the Church of Constantinople – it has been hewn by the axes of the Hagarenes [the 1453 Sack of Constantinople]. But the third, new Rome, the Universal Apostolic Church under thy mighty rule radiates forth the Orthodox Christian faith to the ends of the earth more brightly than the sun . . . Two Romes have fallen, a third stands, a fourth there shall not be . . .<sup>23</sup>

The not-so-subtle implication of Philotheus's letter was that the Russian Orthodox Church was the one true church on earth. Sergius Bulgakov, one of the leaders of the religious renaissance of the Orthodox faith among Russian intellectuals in the early twentieth century,<sup>24</sup> expressed the same conviction in 1935, saying: "Not the whole human race belongs to the Church, only the elect. And not all Christians belong, in the fullest sense, to the Church – only Orthodox." Departure from this "true faith means separation from the church: heresy or schism."<sup>25</sup> And Nicolas Zernov, writing in 1965, observed: "The vision of the humiliated Christ who called each and all to a life of self-denial, humility and forgiveness co-existed in the Russian Church with a proud sense of special election and superiority over all other Christians."<sup>26</sup> Pobedonostsev himself, Over Procurator during the critical years 1880 to 1905, published a history of the Orthodox Church in which he set out to prove that his church "had overcome all obstacles and still preserved in itself that holy fire which our Savior Himself brought down to earth."<sup>27</sup> No matter from which side one approached the history of the Russian Orthodox Church, therefore, all true believers regarded it alone to be the one true church. As Leroy-Beaulieu asserted: " 'The Orthodox Church,' its apologists will tell you, 'remains fixed in the centre of Christendom, equally remote from its opposite poles: because it is the Primeval Church, from which Westerners have swerved, . . .'"<sup>28</sup> Even in the Orthodox seminaries, where teachers and pupils had to rely upon Roman Catholic and Protestant manuals, "Roman doctrine [was] criticized with arguments borrowed from the Protestants, and the errors of the Reformation rejected on the authority of the Roman teaching." In this way, Zernov asserts, "students saw mostly the negative side both of Rome and of the Reformation, and looked upon their own tradition as a halfway house between two erroneous extremes."<sup>29</sup>

Here was a theory of Orthodox Church history every whit as exclusive as the one Ludwig Keller had developed for the Anabaptist/Men-

nonite tradition and which Russian Mennonites had, in a unique way, adopted as their own at least since 1900. Were Russian Mennonites cognizant of how the Russian Church and the majority of Russian officials viewed their own church?<sup>30</sup> And if they were, what did they think they could accomplish by opposing it with Keller's equally exclusive interpretation of their religious tradition? Especially since all power lay on the Russian Orthodox side and they were aliens in the land? The only Mennonite of whom we know that he knew Russian Orthodox Church history well was P. M. Friesen. Frank C. Thiessen wrote of a debate Friesen had with Orthodox priests in Odessa on one occasion:

On the day of the debate the church was packed. The two sides faced each other: two highly educated priests and two poor uneducated [Stundist] gardeners with whom Friesen associated himself. The priests immediately began their attack. But they had underestimated their opponent. When they queried about the stories of the saints, Friesen answered from the Word of God. Finally Friesen began to attack. It was remarkable that the spectators became jubilant about his expositions while they reacted with occasional whistles when the priests spoke. *Friesen knew the history of the Orthodox Church better than they did* [my emphasis] and it did not take four hours until the priests left. Therewith the Stundists had received public justification and for the time being neither the Church nor the police took any measures against them.<sup>31</sup>

Friesen, who had been educated in Switzerland (probably Basel), Odessa and Moscow, must have acquired his knowledge of the Orthodox Church either at the university or on his own. The only other Russian Mennonite who might have had an equivalent knowledge of that church would have been Benjamin H. Unruh. But he has left us no evidence of this.

If Russian Orthodoxy was the one true form of Christianity, and if the Russian people were its primary embodiment, then Russian ethnicity and Orthodox belief were two inseparable parts of an organic whole. Thus Prince Serge Volkonsky could write in his 1924 memoirs with reference to Pobedonostev's and the Orthodox Church's thinking generally at the turn of the twentieth century: "Only the Orthodox are really Russians. Those who are not orthodox," he asserted, "are not real patriots. . . . Anyone leaving the Orthodox Church for another religion is not only an apostate from the faith, but a traitor to his country, and a man who raises his voice against the persecution of other religions is a disturber of principles."<sup>32</sup> Consequently, Russians were forbidden by law to become Catholics, Lutherans, Baptists, or Mennonites, even though the latter were all recognized as legal "confessions" and officially "tolerated." Indeed, there were heavy penalties for leaving the Church; and those who dared to induce others to do so had to pay a price.<sup>33</sup> At the very



least, therefore, many powerful Russian Church and State officials, following the teachings of Uvarov, tied religion closely to nationality. This meant, for example, that a Russian could not be a Baptist. He might be a *Stundist* (seen as a deviation from the Orthodox religion) but he could not be a Baptist. In line with this thinking a court ruled in 1902:

... Baptists are certainly allowed, but Baptists are a German sect, and Germans are allowed to be Baptists; from a legal point of view Russians cannot be Baptists, the accused [Russians] are not Baptists, but only pretend to be Baptists, while they are really *Stundists*, and therefore [as a sect of the Orthodox Church] are answerable before the law.<sup>34</sup>

Non-Russians, therefore, coming into the country as colonists, resident aliens or casual visitors could bring their foreign religions with them. In this respect, Russia appeared most tolerant. Nor did it matter much to the Russian authorities that these “foreigners” might have broken from their original “Western” churches, as the MBs were to do from the Mennonite Church in Russia in 1860.<sup>35</sup> But such tolerance was not extended to Russian subjects; for the latter there was no religious toleration and every deviation from the Orthodox religion was punished. “We may have abolished the slavery of the body,” one dissenting Orthodox cleric observed referring to the emancipation of the Russian peasant, “but is it possible that we can look calmly at the enslavement of the spirit?”<sup>36</sup>

The belief that the Russian “body” could not be separated from its “soul” – the Orthodox religion – tied the church closely to the state and autocracy and led inevitably to persecution. Volkonsky’s own mother had converted to the Catholic faith and constantly referred to Pobedonostsev, the Over Procurator of the Holy Synod from 1880 to 1905, as Torquemada.<sup>37</sup> This man, who held that the Russian state’s power rested upon the Orthodox faith, constantly called upon the state to intervene on behalf of the church. He would have agreed fully with the priest Potekhin who stated:

We bless the Imperial power in Russia, beginning with the Lord’s anointed, our pious Tsar, and ending with his servants, all those governors, judges, police-masters, district police-officers and village policemen – so hated by the propagandists of liberty of conscience – which comes to the aid of the Church, prevents the liberty of defection and perversion, and gives the pastors and their flocks time to improve and be fortified, so that at last they may have the strength to enlighten, protect, and save the flock of the Lord that is in their charge.<sup>38</sup>

Little wonder that under these circumstances proselytizing was considered a criminal offence.

Pobedonostsev, as tutor to both Alexander III (1881-1894) and Nicholas II (1894-1917), and Over Procurator of the Holy Synod among other posts, during a twenty-five year period exerted an "enormous" influence on religious policy in the realm at the turn of the century.<sup>39</sup> His belief that Russia and Orthodoxy were virtually synonymous therefore carried a great deal of weight. In his view, all Russians had to be Orthodox. As a man of profound Orthodox religious faith, he sought to protect and indeed, even to extend, the power of the Orthodox Church in Russia at every opportunity, especially against "Westernizing" religious and secular influences which he too saw as disintegrating forces in the country. Such influences had to be restricted as much as possible, and colonists and foreign nationals of other faiths isolated, if not expelled. According to his biographer, the groups that most alarmed Pobedonostsev were "the *Raskolniki* or Old Believers, the Stundists and Baptists, and the Pashkovites."<sup>40</sup> But nowhere in his biography does Byrnes mention the Mennonites in relation to the Stundists and Baptists. Nevertheless, Bishop Dimitrij of Taurida did so in a letter of 4 October, 1914 to the governor of his district, noting that though the "Germans" (the reference is to the Halbstadt Mennonites) had been invited to "plant agriculture," they had thanked their new fatherland by planting "Stundism and God-hated Baptism" instead.<sup>41</sup> The later Soviet sociologist, A. N. Ipatov, even went so far as to assert in 1977: "... She [the Orthodox Church] hated the Mennonites [the MBs?] because of the role they had played in the origin of the anti-church movement within the rank and file of the Orthodox Church known as Stundism . . . ."<sup>42</sup> Whether or not Pobedonostsev shared this hatred of the Mennonites, he nevertheless sought to restrict their influence along with that of the Old Believers, Stundists, Baptists and Pashkovites. To do so, he developed a twofold policy. On the one hand, he tried repeatedly to use the power of the state to deny "the sects any rights not clearly granted them under Russian law and to harass them in every way possible." On the other hand, he created "educational and propagandistic programs to wean Old Believers away from their church and to strengthen Orthodox hostility toward them."<sup>43</sup> Two years after he came into office the government did indeed pass a law granting these dissident groups legal status; at the same time, however, it severely restricted their rights and religious services. The same law gave the Holy Synod broad powers of censorship over all religious publications which it used to forbid all but Orthodox publications.<sup>44</sup> For example, in 1881 – even before this law was passed – Baptists were forbidden to have their catechism translated into the Russian language for the benefit of the *Stundists*. The latter were dangerous enough without this, Pobedonostsev argued; in any case, such a translation was a mere pretext to further Baptist "religious propaganda."<sup>45</sup>

Pobedonostsev was especially concerned about Russia's Western borderlands, for it was from these regions that the disintegrating Western secular and religious influences penetrated the country. To limit such influences as much as possible, he persuaded the Tsar to appoint only staunch defenders of the Orthodox Church as governors in these areas.<sup>46</sup> He sought to keep alien democratic ideas from entering the country, and to keep Catholics and Protestant "sects" in Western Europe where they belonged. For Russia and Orthodoxy, Pobedonostsev argued, constituted an organic and closed world. The two had been intertwined for nearly a thousand years, evolving in an organic evolutionary process that bound them inseparably to one another. To seek to foist ideas and institutions that had grown up in another country under a wholly different set of historical circumstances onto the Russian people would be destructive of this unique Russian/Orthodox nexus.<sup>47</sup> Each society, he declared, constituted a separate and unique organism and should not borrow ideas and institutions from the outside. It was for this reason that the Orthodox Church, as the soul of the Russian body, needed to be protected by the state from alien influences.

In the Russian context, then, Mennonites – like their Catholic and Lutheran colonist counterparts – were considered non-Russian churches or confessions. They could not be, nor were they, considered to be sects by the Russian Orthodox Church. In a more global, non-Russian context they might well be considered sects if it could be demonstrated that they had broken away from some other church at a given time in history. From this latter perspective, the MB Church, which broke away from the larger Russian Mennonite Church in 1860, might well be considered a sect, but not a sect of the Orthodox Church. Even it could therefore be tolerated within the Russian context. But sects coming out of the Russian Orthodox Church could not. Did the promulgation of the 17 April, 1905 Manifesto on religious toleration change all of this? Did the manifesto place all Orthodox and non-Orthodox religions on an equal footing, thereby taking the sting out of proselytizing across religious party-lines? Or did it merely muddy the waters for a time, giving the government an opportunity to redefine the terms and transform the Mennonites, because of the proselytizing activity of the Mennonite Brethren, into a sect? Whereas Peter Braun's *Kto takie Mennonity* does address this issue, it does so only tangentially since by 1914, when Braun wrote his pamphlet, the issue had already been laid to rest, at least for the duration of the war. It was David H. Epp who, having recovered Keller for the Russian Mennonites in 1897, recognized the role Keller's interpretation of Anabaptist/Mennonite history could play in the conflict. It was he who wrote the tracts and he who promoted Keller's interpretation at every turn. Perhaps he could do so the more

easily since, at least to judge from his written work, he appears to have been largely ignorant of or unconcerned with Russian Orthodox Church history and would therefore not have anticipated how Russian officials might react to a theory of Mennonite Church history that, at least by implication, appeared to reject the prevailing interpretation of Orthodox Church history held in Russia.

Despite the 17 April, 1905 Manifesto on religious toleration, the question whether Mennonites were to constitute a sect or a confession within the Russian context had, by 1910, become a bone of contention within Mennonite as well as in governmental circles, even though the great *Privilegium* had granted the Mennonites the status of a "confession." The Manifestos of 17 April and 17 October, 1905, had, among other things, promised religious liberty to all individual Russian citizens as well as all religious bodies,<sup>48</sup> in effect limiting the privileged position of the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>49</sup> By 1907, however, the imperial government – perhaps under pressure from the established church fearful of the loss of its privileged position – not only began to undermine these promised rights, but even sought to change the status of the Mennonite Church from that granted in the great *Privilegium* with its rights and privileges as an independent confession to that of a sect without them. This threat led, at least in part, to a rapprochement between the Old Church and the Mennonite Brethren, signaled by a number of inter-Mennonite consultations, especially the 28 January, 1910 general *Kirchenkonvent* in Schönwiese and the first joint General Conference held in Schönsee on 26-28 October, 1910. It was the latter body that created the three, then four-man *KfK* to negotiate with the government on all matters religious. But if the external threats brought Russian Mennonites together, the internal divisions, especially over the issue of "religious propaganda," continued to divide them. The subsequent discussions/negotiations between the Russian Mennonites and the Tsarist government as to whether the greater Russian Mennonite Church should constitute a "sect" or "confession," therefore, had both an inter-Mennonite as well as a larger Mennonite-Russian government aspect to it. Whereas neither Braun nor Epp addressed the first, it is nevertheless important that we do so since it plays an important role in the second. That these two, initially separate issues came together during the critical years of 1905 to 1914 is made apparent by the following events and the documents that resulted from them: first, the investigation of the Raduga Press by the Taurida Vice Governor in March of 1910 and Heinrich J. Braun's subsequent article, "Mennonites or Baptists?" (and David H. Epp's response to it in *Der Botschafter*);<sup>50</sup> and second, by the Neuhalbstadt Consultation of 11-12 April, 1914 and P. M. Friesen's subsequent pamphlet, "Confession or Sect."

On the occasion of the MB secession from the Russian Mennonite Church in 1860,<sup>51</sup> the latter, through the local colony administrators and some of the bishops,<sup>52</sup> sought to discredit the break-away group by calling it a sect, and declaring it no longer to be Mennonite. As a result of their complaint to the Russian authorities, the Supervisory Commission, in its directive to the colony administrators of 29 November, 1860, appeared to accept the sectarian designation, referring to the group as "the new sect" and calling for its suppression.<sup>53</sup> The secessionists,<sup>54</sup> however, in their response of 27 December, 1860, rejected the sectarian label, stating categorically: "We are not a newly arisen sect . . ." <sup>55</sup> Once made, however, the accusation could hardly be laid to rest, and, if asserted often enough, could lead to the loss of the break-away group's "Mennonite" privileges, perhaps even to exile from the Mennonite colonies.<sup>56</sup> Many in the Old Church would have welcomed such an eventuality,<sup>57</sup> though others, like Bishop Johann Harder of Blumstein, suggested that the group be recognized "as a church with similar [Mennonite] rights to the other Mennonite churches" if it adopted a confession of faith that "corresponds substantially to ours."<sup>58</sup> Thus, at the very inception of the MB Church in the early 1860s, the charge of "sectarianism," the issue of their Mennonite privileges, and the matter of a "Mennonite" confession of faith all intersected. Within a few years of that inception, the secessionists' relationship to the *Stundists* and German Baptists, so hated by Pobedonostsev, would add to an already potentially volatile mix.

It was largely due to the efforts of Johann Claassen<sup>59</sup> (one of the MB founding fathers) and the St. Petersburg government's reluctance to persecute, or seem to persecute, a group not affiliated in any way with the Russian Orthodox Church for fear that it would make martyrs of its members,<sup>60</sup> that the Russian government was persuaded to come down on the side of the secessionists. MBs, it decreed, as a reformed congregation, were to be considered a Mennonite confession with all the rights and privileges thereto appertaining.<sup>61</sup>

In the meantime, a nearly parallel renewal movement to that within the Mennonite Church had arisen within the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Known as *Stundism*, it quickly developed ties to the "brethren" movement within the Mennonite Church in the late 1850s and early 1860s. As it turned out, these two renewal movements were parts of a larger religious revival that scholars usually trace back to the establishment of the Russian branch of the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1814 during the reign of the pietistically influenced Alexander I.<sup>62</sup> The goal of the Russian Bible Society was to place a modern translation of the Russian Bible into the hands of every Orthodox family in the land; for, until then, the Bible had been available only in Old

Slavonic. By 1826, however, the Russian government's attitude toward the Society had changed; it therefore limited its work to the non-Orthodox. Whether or not the government changed its mind about the society because of the 1825 Decembrist revolt, by 1826 the biblical seed had been sown.<sup>63</sup>

The revivals in Russia had been preceded by revivals in Western Europe, revivals that had led to the establishment of the two great Pietistic missions societies: one in Barmen, Germany;<sup>64</sup> the other in Basel, Switzerland.<sup>65</sup> From these German-speaking lands the revival spread to the German colonies in the Ukraine where groups of "awakened" Christians established home Bible studies (called *Stunden*) in the midst of both Protestant and Catholic territorial churches, later also within the Russian Mennonite Church. Most accounts credit one Johann Bonekemper (1796-1857) from Nümbrecht, Germany who had studied at the Basel Mission School with initiating the renewal amongst the colonists. In his wake came Eduard Wuest (1818-1859) from Württemberg.<sup>66</sup> The former retained the classic Pietistic approach to revival within a territorial church, that is, that the groups of believers meeting in private homes remain members of the larger parish churches, constituting a kind of *ecclesiola in ecclesia* within them. Wuest, however, at least according to Waldemar Gutsche – himself a participant in the Russian evangelical movement – could not free himself "from the thought of a living congregation consisting of believers only."<sup>67</sup>

Whereas the senior Bonekemper did not speak Russian, his son Karl did. And it was apparently through the latter in the village of Rohrbach that Russian peasant harvest workers<sup>68</sup> came to know and experience the meaning of these *Stunden* and introduce them into their home communities.<sup>69</sup> Both father and son Bonekemper encouraged the Russian peasants to do as the Pietists in Germany did: remain in their own (Orthodox) church and carry on the *Stunden* for those who had come to an evangelical faith in Christ. Because they followed his advice, it took some time for the authorities to discover the Russian *Stundists*. Wuest went very much the same route, except that his impact outside the Lutheran colonies was amongst the Mennonites who still had a dim memory of Menno's concept of the "pure church." In any case, it was Wuest's preaching especially among the Gnadenfeld Mennonites that led to revivals and the formation of a new believers' church on 6 January, 1860.<sup>70</sup> From the Baptists, indeed from the German Baptists as we shall yet see, the "awakened" Mennonites adopted immersion baptism.<sup>71</sup> But it was at one of the open-air baptisms of the former, conducted by Abraham Unger, elder of the new MB Church, that a Ukrainian *Stundist* by the name of Efim Tsimbal, who had requested believer's baptism from the newly constituted Mennonite Brethren

Church but had been turned down because of the laws against encouraging Orthodox members to leave their church, surreptitiously inserted himself into a group of some thirty baptismal candidates and was baptized.<sup>72</sup> Virtually all authorities agree it was this Efim Tsimbal who came to be generally recognized by Ukrainian and later Russian Baptists as the founder of their church. Indeed, they take 11 June, 1869, the date of his baptism, as the beginning of their church.<sup>73</sup>

In the meantime, the renewal movement within the Mennonite colonies had also established a significant, though not unproblematic, relationship with J. G. Oncken and the German Baptists. Old Church Mennonites even accused these “New Mennonites” of initially calling themselves Baptists, but retreating from that designation when they began to realize that such an affiliation might cost them their Mennonite privileges.<sup>74</sup> Old Church Mennonite leaders denounced them to St. Petersburg as a sect, hoping to have them banished or at least deprived of their Mennonite privileges. The separatist group’s new-found religious enthusiasm and proselytizing, even among the local Ukrainian villagers, annoyed them since it was against the law. When Oncken’s colleague, August Liebig, arrived in the colonies to help organize the new Mennonite church, Old Church leaders turned him over to the authorities. Liebig wrote to Oncken about it: “The Mennonites [he said, referring to the Old Church Mennonites] have turned me over to the Russian authorities. These Mennonites even had the brothers, who had been newly awakened spiritually in their midst, thrown into prison. O that the Lord would take away their Russian privileges so that they would once again be privileged by God to lead sinners to Christ.”<sup>75</sup>

**Stundists**, Mennonite Brethren and Russian Baptists: there can be little doubt that what kept them from becoming more united were the Russian government’s laws regarding proselytizing among the Orthodox, the fact that at this point Baptists were not a recognized Western confession, and the Mennonite Brethren fear of losing their privileges.<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, Mennonite Brethren continued to help their Russian brethren, both **Stundists** and Baptists, as we shall see.<sup>77</sup> Peter Braun was later to tell his friend Jacob Janzen that, with the exception of a few individuals, Mennonite Brethren had not directly [perhaps he should have said “officially”] carried on evangelism among the Russians. He did, however, state that they had “participated in the work of evangelization among the Russians.” Principally, he continued, Mennonite Brethren work consisted in “supporting the Russian brethren morally and financially.”<sup>78</sup> They certainly did the latter, but in the process of aiding and abetting evangelization among the members of the Orthodox Church, MBs may at times have skirted the borders of the illegal, if they did not in fact on occasion cross over the line.

While the *Stundists* and Russian Baptists were establishing themselves in the South, another evangelical movement emerged in St. Petersburg among the nobility. Initiated by a British aristocrat of Plymouth Brethren affiliation by the name of Lord Radstock, who had been invited to the capital by a Russian lady of nobility converted through his message while on vacation in Switzerland in 1874, the movement quickly spread to include such notables as Colonel of the Guard V. A. Pashkov, Count M. M. Korff, Count A. P. Bobrinskij, Baron P. N. Nicolay, Count Shscherbinin, Princess N. Lieven and her sister Princess Gagarin, Mme. Peuker, and Mme Zosetskaja. These, under the leadership of Colonel Pashkov [the members coming to be called Pashkovites], opened their salons to Lord Radstock, inviting nobility and ordinary folk alike to revival meetings that were attended, on occasion, by over seven hundred guests. During the summer months the nobles retreated to their landed estates which they also opened to the surrounding populace for the preaching of the evangelical Gospel.

Whereas the *Stundists* were originally Pietists in Russian garb, and the Ukrainian Baptists were a mixture of German Baptist and Mennonite Brethren influence, the Radstockists or Pashkovites were ecumenical evangelical Protestants interested primarily in reaching people with the Gospel message of salvation through faith in the death and resurrection of Christ.<sup>79</sup> Those who accepted this gospel message called themselves simply Evangelical Christians. And, like the early and some later *Stundists*, they officially remained members of the Orthodox Church. When Lord Radstock was no longer allowed to enter Russia after 1878, the revival meetings continued under the leadership of Colonel Pashkov and quickly led to the formation of a movement. It was a movement that never lost its central emphasis on the "new birth" nor its conscious de-emphasis on denominational or confessional distinctives; Radstock and later leaders refusing to allow themselves to be diverted from their revivalist message to debating what they considered to be peripheral or at least secondary theological differences among them.

Because of the relative tolerance exercised by the Russian government during the reign of Alexander II and the status of the movement's leaders in St. Petersburg society, authorities, for some time, watched only from the sidelines; Pobedonostsev himself even attending one of the meetings. At least at the outset, these "awakened" nobles were relatively untouchable and spoke out on behalf of the Russian sects: the *Stundists*, Baptists, and Molokans who were beginning to convert in ever larger numbers to Baptism. With the assassination of Alexander II in 1881, however, Pobedonostsev took advantage of the subsequent reaction and began to cast a wary eye on Pashkov and his followers, suggesting, in April of 1882, that "Mr. Pashkov and Count Bobrinskij must



be invited to leave for foreign parts."<sup>80</sup> But it was not until Pashkov invited the disparate evangelical Russian sects to St. Petersburg for a unification meeting in April of 1884 – which, as Edmund Heier has observed, included “Molokans, Baptists, Dukhobors, Stundists, *Menno-nites*<sup>81</sup>, and others . . .” [my emphasis]<sup>82</sup> – that Pobedonostsev took action. Pashkov’s meeting was scheduled to last some ten days, but after only five all the delegates were arrested and sent home. No agreement had as yet been reached by that time on the differences that divided the various groups. Nor, as subsequent events would demonstrate, would they have reached an accord had the meeting been allowed to run its course unhindered. Nevertheless, as Heier also observes, “unity of spirit, an essential step for future co-operation” had been achieved.<sup>83</sup>

Pobedonostsev’s reaction to these evangelical Russians was mirrored in the attitude toward them by the Orthodox Church generally. Feeding off of Uvarov’s attempt to create a national identity that excluded non-Orthodox or culturally subversive elements, Orthodox clerics began to attack the *Stundists* not merely as ‘Protestant heretics’ but also as *Germans*. According to Sergei I. Zhuk, they began ‘to sound the alarm’ about the necessity for officially created restrictions

. . . on the German colonists’ activities in the southern Ukraine. On the level of local politics, this concern played a more significant role in development of new policies towards Germans, than did the ‘fear of the aggressive German Empire’ (after 1877) and the ‘threat of the Germans’ ‘fifth column’ during the World War I.<sup>84</sup>

*Stundists*, therefore, were not only the product of nefarious, non-Orthodox Western heretics; by their conversion to the Evangelical faith they had also begun the process of transforming themselves into Germans. As F. Shcherbina wrote in 1877:

. . . For instance, nearly every Stundist (even the poorest) strives to get a watch and then, with purely German exactness, tries to plan his time and activity according to his watch. Stundists demonstrate the same attitude toward their comfortable clothes. Stundists borrow their clothing styles (. . .) from their teachers, Germans, and this imitating of Germans has reached a point of real pedantry . . .<sup>85</sup>

And five years later the Kherson Orthodox Church paper stated: “Stundists are those who imitate Germans in every manifestation of their life.”<sup>86</sup>

As imitators of Germans the *Stundists*, as well as their colonist mentors, posed in the mind of Orthodox conservatives an ever greater inter-

nal threat as Germany turned from friend to enemy after the Franco-Prussian War. In 1884, for example, the Rev. Nikanor, Bishop of Kherson and Odessa, wrote the Governor of Kherson:

. . . Isn't it well known that the Stunde is disseminated everywhere in our motherland and supported not only by the noble and affluent people in high rank, but also by foreign activists, who have a huge amount of money, activists, who, being the enemies of the Orthodox Church, are hostile to the Russian state as well? . . . The Stunde, in the basic principle of its teaching, is undermining the foundations not only of the Church, but also of the social order and state system!<sup>87</sup>

Thus precisely at the point where the Russian government embarked upon a policy of Russification in an attempt to assimilate its minority populations, the emergence of *Stundism* allowed the Orthodox Church to denounce this new sect as an insidious attempt to Germanize the Russian population. In this way *Stundism* provided the Church with another – and increasingly incendiary – argument with which to oppose foreigners of ‘Evangelical’ faith.

Mennonite Brethren, *Stundists*, Russian Baptists, and Pashkovites were all participants in the evangelical renewal movement in Russia that was beginning to spread from St. Petersburg in the north to the Ukrainian steppes and the Crimean peninsula in the south. And like the nobles on their summer estates, Evangelical German Pietists and Mennonite Brethren made religious contacts with Russian workers who, after the emancipation of 1861, began to arrive in German and Mennonite villages as seasonal harvesters. To the *Stundists*, who sought believer's baptism from the Russian Mennonite Brethren or from German Baptists in Tiflis and Poland, the lines that separated MBs from Baptists may have appeared relatively insignificant, as they did to the German Baptists and Mennonite Brethren themselves. Nevertheless, the quite pervasive emphasis among Russian Baptists, and even Evangelical Christians, on the rejection of military service and the oath for religious reasons, points to a strong Mennonite Brethren influence. This was an influence that had Anabaptist/Mennonite, not Baptist, roots.

It is instructive to note how representatives of the various groups involved in this evangelical renewal movement in St. Petersburg and the Ukraine have portrayed Mennonite Brethren origins. Men like Waldemar Gutsche and Hans Brandenburg, themselves involved in the Evangelical movement, stress MB connections to Wuest and the Kornthal “Brüdergemeinde,” going so far as to argue that even the concept of a believer's church came from Wuest.<sup>88</sup> Baptist historians, on the other hand, have stressed the influence of Oncken on Abraham Unger of Ein-

lage, beginning as early as 1859, and of Gottfried Alf on the Mennonites in the Molotschna.<sup>89</sup> Old Church Mennonites tended to agree with the latter, not so much for reasons of historical accuracy as to be able to denounce the MBs to the government as a sect and have their Mennonite privileges revoked. Mennonite Brethren historians in the wake of P. M. Friesen's history, while recognizing Wuest's influence, have tended to stress the connection to Menno's *Foundations of Christian Doctrine* and the recovery of an early Anabaptist/Mennonite position generally. But no matter the biases of the different denominational historians, it should be clear that the Mennonite Brethren, from the very outset, had strong connections to the renewal movement that emanated from Württemberg Pietism (the Basel Mission School itself deriving from that stream), to the German Baptists from whom they received both guidance and their doctrine of immersion baptism, and to the Mennonite tradition to which they *subsequently* turned – perhaps as an afterthought when they saw their Mennonite privileges threatened. And the MB connection to both the Russian and German Baptists was kept alive by two very important factors: first by the involvement of individual MB evangelists, and at times even of the MBs as a conference, in the surrounding Ukrainian Baptist movement; and, secondly, through the education of their young theologians and missionaries in the Hamburg German Baptist Seminary after it was founded in 1888. Their connection to the Evangelical Christians would come later through Baedeker and his impact on Jacob Kroeker and the Raduga Publishing Association's partnership with Ivan Prokhanov.

By the mid 1860s the attempt, by powerful and influential political and religious leaders within the Old Mennonite Church to have the Russian government declare the Mennonite Brethren a sect, had apparently been thwarted. But all was not lost. Perhaps the same ends could be achieved by having them officially designated as Baptists.<sup>90</sup> Here the opponents of the secessionists thought they were on firmer ground, for within a few years of their inception MBs had indeed established a significant relationship with the German Baptists. Here, also, Russian government officials seemed more inclined to follow because of the MBs "propagandistic,"<sup>91</sup> evangelistic activities and its presumed threat to the established rights of the Russian Orthodox Church. P. M. Friesen, the first Mennonite scholar of any note to address this connection, appears to have consciously attempted to understate the importance of the Baptist relationship for precisely the above reasons.<sup>92</sup> Published in 1911, Friesen's history appeared only one year after Heinrich J. Braun's 1910 "Mennonites or Baptists?"<sup>93</sup> It had clearly been completed well before that date, however.<sup>94</sup> As we shall see in what follows, these were critical years for the Russian Mennonites during which their religious

liberty, as well as their other privileges, came under attack in spite of the promise of religious toleration.

There can be little doubt that it was the potential loss of their "Mennonite privileges" that eventually convinced MBs to distance themselves officially from the Baptists.<sup>95</sup> But that is no reason to question the integrity of the separatists' assertion – made from the very beginning of their movement – that they based their beliefs on Menno's writings. Repeatedly they argued that "in matters of faith and church discipline," their positions were derived from "the Holy Gospel and the teachings of Menno."<sup>96</sup> This was not an idle assertion intended only to safeguard their Mennonite privileges; for as no less an observer than Alexander Klaus wrote in his *Nashi kolonii* shortly after the schism:

... The 'jumpers' [Huepfer] confirmed all the various aspects of their teachings with the texts drawn from the Old and New Testaments as well as their interpretation of Menno's *Fundamentallehre des christlichen Glaubens*. It is therefore difficult, in this regard, to convict them of departing from Mennonite teachings. On the contrary, the sincere enthusiasm they have demonstrated in their dedication to these teachings in both word and deed, have led many an impartial observer to remark: "Not the jumpers, but the rest of the Mennonites have denied their teachings."<sup>97</sup>

Such an appeal to Menno's *Fundamentbuch* also helped MBs to counter the charge of sectarianism and justify their deviation from the practices rather than the teachings of the Russian Mennonite Church. It also allowed them to defend their right to the established Mennonite privileges. With respect to their relationship to the German Baptists, the establishment of a close and perhaps even dependent relationship could, and on occasion when Mennonites actually joined Baptist churches, did lead to the loss of their privileges. Peter Braun even argues in his *Kto takie Mennonity* that it was precisely because of such a potential loss of privileges that virtually no intermarriages took place between Russian Mennonites and German colonists in the land.

Part of the problem, of course, was both purpose and timing. Mennonites, seeking sanctuary and settlement opportunities, entered Russia before the rise of a powerful nationalistic spirit in the country and the attempt by the Tsarist government to create a more uniform, pan Slavic society within its imperial borders. The German Baptists, who originated with Johann G. Oncken's conversion and subsequent baptism on 22 April, 1834, entered Russia as individuals in the mid nineteenth century for purposes of evangelization. In 1853, for example, a German Baptist mission was established in Tilsit; it was from here that Baptist penetration into Russia began. By 1855 there was a small German Baptist group in St. Petersburg, with a tailor, C. Plonus, at its head. It was

this man Johann Claassen contacted in St. Petersburg in November, 1860 for help in his negotiations with the Russian authorities. According to Albert Wardin, however, Plonus' assistance went well beyond his good offices with government officials.<sup>98</sup> On the one hand, therefore, German Baptists expanded into Russia at the very moment the MB Church was being established; on the other, it was also at the very moment the Russian peasants were being emancipated and the government began to attempt to integrate ethnic and religious minorities into Russian society. In this latter regard, Klaus observed in a footnote:

The Ryhensdoerfer colonists enjoyed, as did the Mennonites and Sareptaers, the very advantageous privileges to distill their own brandy, to brew their own beer, etc., and to sell these products within the borders of their own districts. At the present [1867], after the introduction of the volost system, this privilege has been terminated, or – more correctly – has been subordinated to, and integrated into, the common right of all classes to participate in the sale of beverages [liquor].<sup>99</sup>

The above was only a small part of the changes that took place within Russian society in the 1860s, changes that fundamentally altered the Mennonites' relationship to the Russian state in that it placed them on an equal juridical footing with all other segments of society, or at least attempted to do so. What role was now the great *Privilegium*, granted in a very different era, to play? As Eugene Weber has demonstrated in his book on the integration of the peasantry into French society during 1870 - 1914, integration was achieved essentially through universal conscription and the establishment of a national school system.<sup>100</sup> About the same time, the St. Petersburg government, too, attempted to integrate the Mennonite and other foreign ethnic and religious minority communities into Russian society.<sup>101</sup> The peasant in France was neither an ethnic nor a religious minority, however, nor had he been granted special privileges at any time. How successful would the Russian government be in its more difficult venture, especially in light of the nearly seamless connection it posited between nationality and religion? Would or could "German" Mennonites be transformed into Orthodox Russians? And if not, was there any chance of their being integrated into Russian society at all given the mentality Volkonsky described in his memoirs and Pobedonostsev quite apparently advocated from his position as Over Procurator of the Holy Synod at the turn of the century?

In 1873 the Russian government passed a universal conscription law, and in 1880 it began (and in a *ukase* of 1890 completed) the process by which the Mennonite-run and controlled schools were to be nationalized.<sup>102</sup> However, due to the privileges granted them in 1800 by Tsar Paul I<sup>103</sup> and their threat to emigrate en mass in the wake of the con-

scription law of 1873, Russian Mennonites managed to get an exemption from the first in the form of their highly touted *Forsteidienst*<sup>104</sup> – forestry service. And by paying for everything out of their own pockets, even the barracks, they also managed to keep the service largely under their control, thereby thwarting for the time being the process of assimilation that integrating their young men into the Russian military system would almost certainly have brought with it.<sup>105</sup> The government's attempt to nationalize the Mennonite schools was hardly more successful, not being uniformly or systematically accomplished until the Bolsheviks took control under Stalin in the late 1920s.<sup>106</sup> Moreover, Mennonites fought the erosion of their special status every step of the way.<sup>107</sup> Baptists, entering much later and then seeking to recruit followers from the Russian Orthodox citizenry, had no such privileges. Indeed, as an aggressively propagandistic/evangelistic group they appeared to pose a threat to the absolute religious hegemony of the Russian Orthodox Church over its Russian citizenry. As a consequence, they were early exposed to severe persecution. Why, then, should Mennonite Brethren exchange a privileged status for a persecuted one? Thus, at the very moment members of the Old Church sought to label the MBs a sect and have them deprived of their privileges, and their close association with the German and Ukrainian Baptists threatened them with the same consequences, the Imperial Tsarist government embarked upon a national policy that sought to deprive all Mennonites (not only Mennonite Brethren) as well as all minorities of foreign extraction, of a separate status in the realm.

Whatever else his purpose, early in 1873 an official from the State Domains came to the Mennonites of South Russia to discuss the proposed universal conscription law with them.<sup>108</sup> In the Einlage MB church he wished to know what the MB relationship to the Baptists was. He may have thought that if MBs considered themselves Baptists, the new law would be of little concern to them, Baptists not being pacifists. In order to give a considered response, the MB bishop and ministers in the surrounding area met to discuss the question. To their response to the ministry, the group attached a "Mennonite" revision of the 1848 Hamburg German Baptist confession of faith.<sup>109</sup> In 1875 the Einlage MB church decided to have this confession printed. It was the only "MB" confession of faith the fledgling church produced before 1902; it was not Mennonite or Anabaptist, however, though distinctly Mennonite articles had been added to it.<sup>110</sup> Nor were all the MB congregations pleased with it, even though the differences between Mennonite Brethren and Baptists were duly noted in an attached addendum, which was also sent to the ministry. The differences – such as nonresistance, the rejection of the oath, and the practice of foot-washing after com-

munion, though noted, appeared relatively insignificant when compared to the addendum's description of the Baptist congregations as "living churches" with which the MBs could literally have "intimate communion." In contrast, the Mennonite, or Old Church, was referred to as "spiritually dead" because of the presumed chasm between what it professed and what it practiced. To the outsider it could easily appear that in essentials MBs were in agreement with the Baptists; in non-essentials, with the other Mennonites. Indeed, an unidentified person writing in the *Odessaer Zeitung* around 1900 quoted Joseph Lehmann, a professor at the Hamburg-Horn German Baptist seminary and H. J. Braun's teacher, as making this very point. Instead of speaking of two separate Mennonite groups, Lehmann spoke of two Baptist groups. The writer continued, quoting Lehmann: "The Mennonite Brethren only share 'a few peculiarities' with the Mennonites; with the Baptists, [they share] 'all the essentials.'" <sup>111</sup> Why, then, should government officials not regard MBs to be more Baptist than Anabaptist, especially if they submitted a Baptist confession to them as their own? Indeed, as Wardin writes: "After the German Baptists gained recognition from the government in 1879, the government counted the Mennonite Brethren as Baptists. The Mennonite Brethren protested, and in the following year the government recognized the separate character of the Mennonite Brethren." <sup>112</sup>

The above governmental recognition should have resolved the issue once for all, but it did not. For one thing, MBs and Ukrainian Baptists, on 21-23 May, 1882, held a joint conference in Rückenau. Who was to believe their disclaimers now? Then, according to A. H. Unruh (Benjamin's older brother) in 1896 Field Marshall Malama, president of the government's military recruiting commission was angered by something David J. Dyck, president of the Mennonite Forestry Oversight Committee, had done and decided to take out his ire on the Mennonites by having the Mennonite Brethren declared to be Baptists. In pursuit of this goal he turned to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, using the good offices of the Chortitza and Kronsweide Mennonite Church councils. His efforts, however, came to naught, for on 28 December, 1896 order Nr. 4349 came down from the Ekaterinoslav authorities that the issue had been decided in 1880 and everyone was to abide by that decision. <sup>113</sup> About the same time – and perhaps not unrelated to it – the minutes of that joint 1882 MB/Baptist conference were discovered by police in the home of a Russian Baptist participant and published with commentary by a certain M. A. Kalnev in 1897, and again by someone else in 1900. Throughout these publications, the MBs were referred to as "Baptists." <sup>114</sup> To what extent this was done with tacit or even active government approval remains unknown. <sup>115</sup>

In 1896 an essay in the *Mennonitische Blätter* addressed the issue. As others were to do later, the writer observed that the topic, MBs/Baptists, was being frequently and hotly debated in both private and public Mennonite gatherings. Dividing the subject into juridical and essential components, the writer asserted that in the first sense, according to the law, MBs might well be Mennonites, but then so were many others who did not practice their Mennonite faith. As to their essence, the writer was not quite so positive, though he tended to the belief that, even here, they were essentially Mennonite.<sup>116</sup> He was answered by J. F. Harms, editor of the American *Zionsbote*, who recognized the writer's overall positive evaluation. Nonetheless, Harms felt compelled to touch on two issues: first, whether MBs were indeed Baptists; second, what their attitude was to the Old Church. Harms answered the first question in the negative, arguing that with the possible exception of Abram Unger, all early MBs regarded themselves as Mennonites. When the Russian government attempted to implement universal conscription in 1873, he observed, as many MBs as other Mennonites left for North America. And after they had come to America, where there were no civil penalties for joining the Baptists, the MBs had made no move to do so. Harms answered the second question by pointing out that though inter-Mennonite relations had gotten off to a rocky start in 1860, those relations had improved markedly since the 1880s, especially between MBs and those in the Old Church who recognized the latter's problems and sought to correct them.<sup>117</sup>

If the topic was important enough to be discussed in the German *Mennonitische Blätter* and responded to by the editor of the American *Zionsbote*,<sup>118</sup> it was also important enough to be addressed in the pages of the *Odessaer Zeitung*. There, in an article entitled "Baptists or not?" of 1901, the anonymous author who was quite obviously not a Mennonite, once again observed that his topic had already received a great deal of attention. What the author of the article in the *Mennonitische Blätter* had only alluded to – that the MBs had initially called themselves Baptists – he asserted as fact. They had indeed regarded themselves as Baptists at the outset; only later had they changed their minds.<sup>119</sup> As members of the Old Church argued, the MBs had done so for specific reasons. In the meantime, however, they retained their close ties to the Baptists while at the same time refusing to recognize members of the Old Church as their Christian brothers. After citing Joseph Lehmann's<sup>120</sup> arguments asserting the Baptist influence on the MB Church, the writer concluded with the following passage from Lehmann's history:

After some indecision it was determined [by the MBs] that only baptized (should read 'rebaptized') persons should be admitted to the communion table



*... and thus a true Baptist church came into existence in Southern Russia. To be sure, it called itself – and still does – a Mennonite Brethren Church, first and foremost in order not to lose any privileges (!!!) the Mennonites living in Russia possess. And, indeed, it [the church] does possess a few Mennonite characteristics!!*<sup>121</sup>

Whether or not this anonymous author, as an outsider, was seeking to add fuel to a fire already burning brightly in the Russian Mennonite communities, he was answered almost immediately, in the same paper, by a member of the MB Church, quite possibly P. M. Friesen himself.<sup>122</sup> Whoever he was, the respondent categorically denied the assertion that MBs had initially called themselves Baptists, asserting that a mass of documentary evidence soon to be published proved quite the opposite. He also questioned the objectivity of Lehmann's interpretation, arguing that no MB had been involved in the publication of Lehmann's history, nor did Lehmann know anything about MBs or the tenacity with which they clung to their Mennonite religious convictions.<sup>123</sup> The many MB school teachers, he continued, regularly taught the Old Mennonite catechism to their classes, thereby demonstrating their commitment to those teachings. Furthermore, if MBs had remained Mennonite only because of their privileges, the history of their American brothers, who were all emigrants from Russia after 1873, proved precisely the reverse. For MB/Baptist relations were closer in Russia, where negative consequences might result from such relations, than in America where this was not the case and the Baptists were a large and honored denomination.<sup>124</sup> Throughout this discussion there is no indication that any of the participants were aware of Pobedonostsev's fear of, and hatred for, the Baptists, though it may have been an unspoken factor.

It was during these years that the MBs began to contemplate the creation of a new confession of faith; the preamble pinpoints the decision to do so as taken at the MB Conference in May of 1898. Several "brothers" whose names are not given were commissioned to review all relevant confessional materials and produce a new confession.<sup>125</sup> One of these "brothers" – indeed the one actually to write the confession – was none other than P. M. Friesen.<sup>126</sup> He had left his mark, perhaps not only on the translation of the 1873 "Baptist" confession; he was actively involved in the MB/Baptist debates during the 1890s, even serving a Baptist congregation in Odessa as minister for a time. At the height of these debates, he drafted the new confession. Should he have remained entirely unmoved by the persistent attack on the MBs as Baptists? Not only by members of the Old Church, but also by outsiders and even influential members of the Russian society, perhaps even officers of the Imperial government? We have seen Albert Wardin charge him with understating the scope and importance of that relationship. Was that

done intentionally, and did all of this play into the decision to prepare an MB confession based exclusively on previous Anabaptist/Mennonite confessions?<sup>127</sup>

Undoubtedly, one other factor must have entered into these considerations: that was an awakening interest in the study of Anabaptist/Mennonite origins. A number of indicators point in this direction. There is, first, David H. Epp's addendum on Anabaptist origins to his 1897 catechism. In the same year Heinrich J. Braun wrote to Ludwig Keller: "It is my goal, while in Germany, to learn as much as possible about the historical origins of the Mennonites." During these years Benjamin H. Unruh began to study in Basel and others elsewhere, most with a growing interest in the Anabaptist past of the Mennonites. To what extent P. M. Friesen, who was to become the historian of the Russian Mennonite experience, partook in this interest has remained unclear. Perhaps that interest was greater than we are aware of.

Whatever the case, the 1902 confession Friesen wrote (or compiled, as the case may be) is different in significant ways from that of 1873, and, I believe, different in spite of P. M. Friesen and the MBs. In the case of the 1873 confession of faith, Unger and the Einlage MB church simply added the so-called "Mennonite distinctives" to the German Baptist confession of faith.<sup>128</sup> In 1900, however, most probably due to the attack on MBs as Baptists and the MB desire, as a consequence, to produce a "Mennonite" confession of faith, Friesen went back to study a whole series of Anabaptist confessions; in doing so, he accidentally recovered the very heart of the Anabaptist position. I have discussed this position and its derivation at some length in two recent studies: first, in the book *Erasmus, the Anabaptists, and the Great Commission*,<sup>129</sup> and, secondly, in the essay: "Present at the Inception: Menno Simons and the Beginnings of Dutch Anabaptism."<sup>130</sup> The Anabaptists, in dependence upon Erasmus's paraphrases of the Great Commission in the Gospel of Matthew and the baptismal passages in the Acts of the Apostles, interpreted Christ's commission through the baptismal passages in Acts 2, 8, 9, 10, and 19, but especially through Acts 2, Peter's Pentecost Sermon. In this view, the Great Commission commands two kinds of "teaching." The first kind is the initial teaching of the good news of the gospel. After this good news about Christ has been accepted, the believer converted and baptized, the second consists of the teaching "to obey everything I [Christ] have commanded you." The first deals with the proclamation of the gospel, the second commands discipleship. What takes place in between – acceptance, conversion and baptism – makes possible the obedience commanded by Christ. In this view, the discipleship of which nonresistance and Christ's way of peace<sup>131</sup> was a central aspect for the Anabaptists is impossible without

the preceding stages. As a consequence, there are no "Anabaptist/Mennonite distinctives," every Christian comes under the same requirements.

What is interesting now with respect to the 1902 MB confession of faith is that this Anabaptist perspective, usually most clearly apparent in the confessional article on baptism, is explicitly and fully developed. This marks it off very distinctly not only from the 1873 Unger confession, but also from the 1853 "Flemish, Frisian and High German Anabaptist" confession published by the Rudnerweide congregation and the seventeenth-century Cornelis Ris confession published by Carl H. A. van der Smissen in 1895.<sup>132</sup> It is possible that this section was drawn directly from the passage on baptism in Menno's *Fundamentboek* of 1539, where Menno most clearly replicated the Erasmian argument.<sup>133</sup> But the lingering question remains: did P. M. Friesen and the MBs know what they had done? I have seen no indication that they did.

In effect, the Russian MBs were now more Anabaptist/Mennonite in their confession of faith than the members of the Old Church. Nonetheless a clarified Anabaptist/Mennonite orientation did not reunite them with their Russian brethren; rather, it appears to have increased their association with the *Stundists*, Ukrainian Baptists, and Pashkovite Evangelical Christians. For only one year after writing the 1902 MB confession of faith, P. M. Friesen was asked to submit a written confession of faith on behalf of *Stundist* Yevdokia Grositzkaja who was being tried in the Eighth District Civil Court of Kiev under State Councilor Beletzky. Friesen had come to the aid of *Stundists* on numerous occasions in their dealings with St. Petersburg, about the same time submitting a thirty-page brief to Pobedonostsev on their behalf together with a cover letter chiding the Over Procurator for persecuting fellow Christians.<sup>134</sup> He was also well known to the Baptists since he had pastored a Baptist congregation in Odessa for some eight years. But he did not submit a replica of the 1902 MB confession to the court in Kiev, for there are marked differences between the two. Though the sequence of topics is virtually identical in both, a few, like the statements on non-resistance and the oath, are omitted. Furthermore, the article on baptism is dramatically shortened in the 1903 confession, leaving out completely any reference to the Great Commission or the Erasmian/Anabaptist interpretation. Perhaps equally significant is the fact that Article VIII, on Civil Order, states: "*Military duty we perform according to the orders of the lawful authority*, but we pray fervently for peace in all the world and wait for the coming of the Kingdom of God, when truth, peace and love will become unbreakable law" [my emphasis].<sup>135</sup> If Friesen's conduct in this case is any indication of how Mennonite Brethren dealt with their Russian fellow believers, then it should

be apparent that they did not seek to impose their confessional views upon the *Stundists* or Baptists, but sought simply to help their more oppressed brethren wherever they could. Perhaps it was Friesen's "Allianz" orientation that allowed him to act in this manner.

But the intertwining of the various groups went even deeper. It is not known if Lord Radstock ever visited the Mennonite colonies. But his convert and follower, Dr. Baedeker, did. Baedeker, who was introduced by Radstock to his noble followers in St. Petersburg in 1875, may have come in contact with the Mennonites as early as 1877 when he came to Russia for three years "to resume his evangelistic labours primarily among the German-speaking populations of its towns and cities."<sup>136</sup> But we do not know this with any certainty. What we do know is that Baedeker was in the Molotschna colony sometime in early 1905 where Jacob Kroeker and certainly many others were powerfully influenced by him.<sup>137</sup> Having made contact with the Mennonites, Baedeker then also brought them into closer contact with the *Stundists* and the St. Petersburg evangelical nobility,<sup>138</sup> for it was he who induced Kroeker to speak at a meeting in the home of Princess Lieven on Easter morning 1905, the very day the toleration edict was proclaimed.<sup>139</sup> Kroeker served these noble circles by repeatedly preaching in their midst until 1914.<sup>140</sup> E. H. Broadbent, himself powerfully influenced by Ludwig Keller's interpretation of Anabaptist history, also came through the Mennonite colonies, as the notices in the *Friedensstimme* amply attest. These were all men of international stature in the Christian world who did not disdain to stop in the Russian Mennonite villages to preach and try to win "the quiet in the land" to a more active involvement in the attempt to evangelize Russia.

While Jacob Kroeker and H. J. Braun were yet students at the Hamburg Baptist seminary, I. S. Prokhanov, later the outstanding leader of Russia's Evangelical Christians, visited them. In his autobiography Prokhanov says only: "From Stockholm I went on to Hamburg, where I saw Jacob Kroeker and Heinrich Braun and other young Mennonite preachers, who had previously come from Russia and were studying for the ministry. These men afterwards became prominent leaders among the Mennonites."<sup>141</sup> Prokhanov does not tell us what they discussed. But these were years in which he, as well as many others in Russia, began to look forward to a religious revival in the country on the scale of the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation.

Edmund Heier, in developing the background to the St. Petersburg nobility's broad reception of Radstock's evangelical message, traces the growing interest in religious renewal on a number of levels in Russia after the Crimean War (1853-1855) and the subsequent reforms of the 1860s, beginning with the peasant emancipation of 1861, the granting

of local self-government in the zemstva reforms of 1864, legal reforms and the introduction of trial by jury in the same year, and the relaxation of the censorship laws in 1865. These were the very years in which the renewal movement was pulsating through the German and Mennonite colonies, and beginning to spill over into the Russian villages where it found fertile soil. Meanwhile, the Orthodox Church, tied so closely to the state and autocracy, remained complacent, secure in its untouchable position within Russian society but increasingly seen as compromised by its ties to the State.<sup>142</sup> E. M. de Vogue, French ambassador to the court of the tsars since 1872, compared the religious discontent of his day in Russia to that in Western Europe prior to the Reformation.<sup>143</sup> Indeed, another French Catholic, Leroy-Beaulieu, whose work we have repeatedly cited, argued that since Russia "never had either a Luther or a Reformation," her faith had stagnated without any major challenge or reform.<sup>144</sup> The nobility had become indifferent to the church, regarding the priesthood with disdain, while the intelligentsia had turned to secular utopian ideologies or to outright nihilism to fill its spiritual void. The call for reform by some of Russia's great writers like Dostoevsky in the late nineteenth century also went unheard by the Church. Not until the early twentieth century did a number of intellectuals return to the Church in order to reinvigorate it, calling upon others to join them in their endeavor.<sup>145</sup>

Many participants in the evangelical revival hoped for such a general reformation movement; others believed it had already arrived with the emergence of *Stundism*, Baptism, and the Pashkovite phenomenon. In his autobiography, Prokhanov asserted at the very outset that he had "labored long and arduously for such a Reformation in Russia."<sup>146</sup> In another place he remarked:

Thus the general opinion of statesmen and prominent men and women of the world, and especially of the Russian people themselves, is that an exceptionally great future role awaits Russia, surpassing all precedents in the world's history.

In the opinion of the author, this future role lies in the religious realm of life. The only condition is that she will accept Christ and His Gospel as the basis of life and will realize the restoration of the primitive apostolic Christianity.<sup>147</sup>

Prokhanov's parents were Molokans from the Caucasus city of Vladikavkas who had converted to Baptism. Led by one Nikita Veronin, who had been baptized by a German colonist named Martin Skalweit, and a brilliant young man named Vassily Pavlov educated by Oncken himself in Hamburg, the Baptist movement among the Molokans of Transcaucasia spread rapidly. Veronin was baptized in 1869, the same year as Efim Tsimbal, regarded as the founder of the Ukrainian Baptist Church.

Only some five years later, Lord Radstock began his work of religious revival among St. Petersburg's nobility. As Prokhanov observed, "Each group was entirely independent of the other and unaware in the beginning that a similar work was going on elsewhere in Russia." From this fact he, and obviously many others, concluded "that the time was fulfilled and 'the hour had come' for a spiritual revival in Russia. The same Spirit breathed at the same time on people in different places and produced really spiritual movements . . . ." <sup>148</sup> He was convinced a new spiritual day was dawning in Russia.

But there was one major hindrance to this "restoration of . . . primitive apostolic Christianity" in Russia: the government's sporadic, and under Pobedonostsev not so sporadic, persecution of Russia's dissenting Evangelicals, and its prosecution of those who, through proselytism and other means, enticed members of the Orthodox Church to transgress the law of the land and leave the Church. Until approximately 1869, the *Stundists* had remained relatively undetected. <sup>149</sup> Indeed, during Alexander II's reign (1855-1881), the sects were left very much to their own devices even though the Church sought to suppress the new movements. Often, when they were dragged into court, the charges against them were dismissed because of inadequate laws or sympathetic judges who blamed the Orthodox Church for its callous disregard of the spiritual needs of the people. <sup>150</sup> On 27 March, 1879 the government even granted the Baptists legal status as a confession with the right to develop their own congregations and hold church services. However, since the law did not distinguish between Baptists as a foreign, German confession, and the Russian Baptists as an Orthodox sect, it appeared, at first, as though Russian Baptists and German Baptists alike were to be tolerated. But when the former applied for a permit to build their own church, a process was begun that led directly to the Ministry of the Internal Affairs. In 1882, the year in which Ukrainian Baptists met in conference with Mennonite Brethren in the Molotschna, the decision was made that the law did not apply to the Ukrainian Baptists, but only to the German Baptists in the colonies, the latter having come largely out of the Lutheran and Reformed churches. <sup>151</sup> This meant that as far as persons leaving the Orthodox Church were concerned, nothing had changed. Should the attitude of the Tsar toward them change, *Stundists* and other sectarians could once again suffer persecution. For the government still believed that religion and ethnicity belonged inseparably together; whether Russians and Orthodoxy, Poles and Catholicism, or Germans and Protestantism. <sup>152</sup>

Two events in particular transformed this early, more open attitude toward the Russian sectarians. The first was the appointment of Pobedonostsev as Over Procurator of the Holy Synod in 1880; the sec-

ond was the assassination of Alexander II in 1881. Known in some circles as Russia's Torquemada, Spain's infamous sixteenth-century Grand Inquisitor,<sup>153</sup> Pobedonostsev had the Russian leaders of the Evangelical Christians exiled in 1884, and in spite of a law of 3 May, 1883 which appeared in fact to give legal recognition to the Old Believers and other established sects, even granting them civil rights, he turned up the heat on the *Stundists* and Russian Baptists. No wonder Ratushniy together with Riaboskapa, two early followers of Efim Tsimbal, made trips to Kiev and St. Petersburg in 1882 and again in 1884 to submit petitions seeking recognition for the *Stundo-Baptists* from the government; but in vain. For as early as 1881 Pobedonostsev had declared categorically: ". . . there can be no Russian Baptists."<sup>154</sup> And so a systematic persecution set in. Secret "ministerial circulars" were sent out to local authorities telling them how to interpret imperial decrees,<sup>155</sup> *Stundists* and Russian Baptists were tried in the courts and banished to Siberia or imprisoned,<sup>156</sup> and when the public trials aroused hostility against the Orthodox Church, the heretics were exiled secretly "by administrative order."<sup>157</sup>

All petitions against such practices were turned aside or simply ignored. Already in 1869, J. G. Oncken had petitioned that Baptists be legally recognized. Count Sievers, then Minister of Internal Affairs, had responded by telling the Baptist leader: "There is only one difficulty in the way of your sect being acknowledged. And that is, you are making proselytes. That is not allowed in Russia . . ."<sup>158</sup> The *Stundo-Baptists* themselves, in 1882 and again in 1884, as we have seen, petitioned for recognition. But since they were Russians they could not be Baptists, only Orthodox. In 1888 the Swiss President of the European Evangelical Allianz<sup>159</sup> petitioned Alexander III to grant complete religious toleration in Russia. The Tsar forwarded the letter to Pobedonostsev for a response. The latter wrote in reply:

Nowhere in Europe do heterodox religions enjoy so perfect a liberty as in the midst of the Russian people. Europe persists in not recognizing the fact. For the single reason that, with you, religious liberty, as inscribed in your laws, *implies the absolute right of unlimited propaganda*. That is the main cause of your recriminations against the restrictions which our laws impose on those who would turn the faithful from Orthodoxy or abjure our faith . . . Russia having received her vital principle from the Orthodox faith, it is her sacred duty, bequeathed to her by her history, to shield the Church from all that could threaten her safety – a duty which has become the essential condition of Russia's existence as a nation . . .<sup>160</sup>

The laws regarding proselytism then had but one goal: to protect the Church from internal and external enemies. It does not seem to have

dawned on Pobedonostsev that Orthodoxy, as Russia's "vital principle," should have been able to stand by its own strength, without the State's support. As Leroy-Beaulieu observed, Pobedonostsev's belief that the Orthodox Church needed the State's support pointed to its own inability to justify its existence. Instead, it created a kind of Orthodox serfdom sanctioned by law that forbade any Orthodox believer to leave the Church.<sup>161</sup> *Stundists*, Russian Baptists and Evangelical Christians (Pashkovites) who had converted under the influence of Western Christian proselytizers – whether English, German or Mennonite – deserved the punishment they received, as did the foreign proselytizers when caught.

Virtually every historian describes these Russian sectarians as fearless propagandists for their faith.<sup>162</sup> They deemed preaching the Gospel a duty,<sup>163</sup> and the fulfillment of the Great Commission, so central to early Anabaptism, their chief obligation.<sup>164</sup> It should therefore not surprise us to find that at the 1884 organizing convention of the Ukrainian Baptist Church the first order of business was to set up the new church's "missionary work among Russians, by Russians."<sup>165</sup> Among the delegates to this convention were six Molotschna Mennonite Brethren and a German Baptist, I. V. Kargell<sup>166</sup> from St. Petersburg, the latter a frequent assistant and translator for Dr. Baedeker on his prison ministry travels. One of the Mennonite Brethren, Johann Wieler,<sup>167</sup> was elected the convention's chairman and Kargell its vice chairman. The conference proceeded to elect a permanent missionary committee to carry out its work. Though the regional representatives were all Ukrainians, the president and treasurer were, once again, Mennonite Brethren – Johann Wieler and I. F. Isaak. Funding came largely from the German (MB) colonists and German American sources.<sup>168</sup>

As early as 1884, therefore, Molotschna Mennonite Brethren were heavily involved in the missionary work of the Ukrainian Baptists, but primarily in a supporting role. Nevertheless, there are indications that the Brethren were themselves eager to get directly involved. E. H. Broadbent, for example, writing shortly after the 1905 manifestos, observed that the German Mennonite colonies in the South were

... aroused suddenly from a century of quiet isolation from their Russian neighbors, to find themselves missionaries among an inquiring people, with such an opportunity of serving the Lord in the Gospel as is seldom found. They live here, have the language, know the people, and have been brought up in the knowledge of the Word. Now that liberty is given, they may well be encouraged to go forward like Joshua, and possess the land.<sup>169</sup>

This was precisely what the Mennonite Brethren sought to do at their 1906 general conference, the first after the 1905 manifestos. Though



the minutes of the conference are apparently no longer extant, Abraham Braun (Peter and H. J. Braun's youngest brother) writes in his "The Christian Divisions in the Russian-German Mennonite Congregations" of 1938:

... When the Mennonites immigrated to Russia, they were forbidden to 'propagate their religion' in the Orthodox Church under threat of severest punishment. When the Manifesto of 10 October, 1905 [new style] granted freedom of religion, *the Mennonite Brethren Church believed that this barrier had fallen* [my emphasis]. Consequently, at the conference of May, 1906 at Nikolaievka, a committee "to evangelize the Russian people" was elected. This committee appointed evangelists and began to circulate evangelical Christian literature. But many saw in this work the forbidden proselytizing; and when the government declared that the manifesto was not to be interpreted in this fashion, for missionary work among the Orthodox faithful was still as much forbidden as it had ever been, the above committee was disbanded at the 1910 general conference.<sup>170</sup>

The initial reaction of the MBs to the April, 1905 proclamation may well have been similar to the one described by Jacob Kroeker in St. Petersburg. On the very day the declaration was promulgated, Jacob Kroeker was in the capital city attending a conference of Evangelical Christians in the home of Princess Lieven which he was to address.

On Easter morning," he writes, "at 6:00 AM all the conference participants were together in the villa. At that point the princess entered the hall, dressed in white, with a princely crown on her head and holding in her shaking hands the imperial edict. She read it aloud: an indescribable moment! Before the bells pealed and the public was informed we were told of the glad tidings about to be proclaimed; we fell to our knees to thank God for this liberation of the captive Russian people. We were especially thankful for the liberation of the brothers and sisters suffering in banishment."<sup>171</sup>

But alas, the prayers of thanksgiving were premature, for what had been so publicly proclaimed was to be gradually undermined in secret.

Aside from the promised freedoms, Nicholas II had also promised to grant a national assembly. Called the *Duma* and announced in August, 1905, it was to be primarily consultative, however. Members were elected to it by an indirect and relatively limited suffrage, though even peasants were initially well represented. Nevertheless, the vast majority of Russia's inhabitants, Mennonites included, believed that they had been granted a truly parliamentary legislature along with a new constitution.<sup>172</sup> This was not the case, however. Nor were the promised freedoms immediately forthcoming. They had first to be established by legislation introduced in the Duma primarily, though not exclusively, by ministers of the crown who held their portfolios at the pleasure of

the Tsar. Essentially, these ministers, aside from having to explain and justify their actions in the Duma from time to time, were responsible to the Tsar, not the Duma. There was, then, as Witte himself argued in his memoirs with regard to the law dealing with the freedom of the press, a period of uncertainty between the time when the Manifesto with its implicit rejection of earlier regulations was published, and the time when new ones could be passed into law.<sup>173</sup> But while the mass of the people, Mennonites included, believed that the Manifesto indeed constituted the new law, the ministers of the Department of Internal Affairs, beginning with the archconservative and even reactionary P. N. Durnovo in December, 1905, began to implement policy by means of secret circulars sent out to the governors. Frederic S. Zuckerman writes:

By the end of 1905, therefore, despite the government's victories in Moscow and St. Petersburg, the forces of order perceived themselves to be engaged in a struggle for the regime's very survival. In late December Durnovo launched a counter-offensive against the revolution which in its merciless quality reflected Tsardom's sense of desperation. Throughout the winter of 1906 Durnovo blanketed the provincial outposts with countless secret circulars urging his minions to strike decisively and pitilessly against the revolution . . . .<sup>174</sup>

No wonder, then, that an editorial in the *Friedensstimme* of 29 April, 1906 – before ever the first session of the Duma had opened – reported that Witte, who had just resigned as head of the government's Council of Ministers, had not yet established the promised freedoms as the people had hoped.<sup>175</sup> By July the *Friedensstimme* was reporting that those promised freedoms were being scaled back or even partially retracted, and the Duma itself reduced nearly to a paper tiger.<sup>176</sup>

## “Raduga” as the Sign of God’s New Covenant with the Russian People

*Toward the close of the nineteenth century a new group was formed among them [the Mennonites of South Russia], the “Brüdergemeinde” (brothers’ church), which resembled the Evangelical Christians very much. One group of them in one of the colonies had a small publishing enterprise which issued a German Christian paper, “Friedensstimme” (The Voice of Peace). Their leader, Heinrich Brown [Braun], became interested in my work, and came once to St. Petersburg. In the course of our conversation I proposed that we should form an All-Russian company for producing and spreading Russian [Christian] literature; that they should manage all the financial part of the work and I would undertake the literary labor.*

*Brown and his companions consented to my proposal, and in 1908 the first Russian Protestant Christian (Evangelical) Publishing Association was formed, under the name of “The Rainbow.”*

— Ivan S. Prokhanov, *In the Cauldron of Russia 1869 – 1933*.

It was in the wake of the April and October 1905 manifestos and the promise of a legislative Duma that P. M. Friesen, along with some other individuals, set about establishing a political party which Klivanov argued united “bourgeois elements of the Baptists, Evangelical Christians and Mennonite churches,” and which called itself “The Union of Freedom, Truth and Peace.” Headed by Friesen, according to Klivanov, it included “leaders and important figures of Baptism and Evangelical Christianity, as for example I. S. Prokhanov, N. V. Odintsov, I. M. Staroverov and P. E. Judin.” In all, it had seventeen active and one honorary member.<sup>1</sup> Friesen, of course, as Terry Martin points out, had long-standing ties to the Russian Baptist movement. He had also, as we have seen, come to the defense of the *Stundists*. But how and where he established a relationship with Prokhanov has remained unclear. We know that as early as 1895 Prokhanov had contacted Jacob Kroeker and H. J. Braun at the Hamburg Baptist seminary. In 1900, as a first-time delegate to the Mennonite Brethren General Conference in Vassilovka, Braun met Friesen and spent several days (17 and 18 May) working

through the evolving MB confession of faith with him.<sup>2</sup> Whether Braun provided the connection, in the “Frizen Party” (as the Union came to be called in the Russian press because of P. M. Friesen’s prominent role in it) we see once again the already fairly long-standing relationship between Mennonite Brethren, *Stundists*, Russian Baptists and Evangelical Christians.

Aside from the political aims of Friesen’s party outlined by both Klibanov and Terry Martin, the party must also have had a religious goal that brought these “evangelizing” groups together. In all probability it was their mutual conviction that Russia was on the verge of a religious Reformation the likes of which the world had not seen since the sixteenth century. This reformation, as envisioned by Prokhanov, the Baptists<sup>3</sup> and the Mennonite Brethren, was to reach farther back in Christian time than had the one in the sixteenth century in order to recreate the primitive church in Russia, thereby setting an example to the rest of the world. As Prokhanov wrote in his “Resurrection Call” to the Christians of the world as late as 1928:

It is true that the great Reformers who arose at the end of the Middle Ages strove mightily to re-create among their people the original pattern of the Christian Church. A great deal was accomplished by them, but yet this was not sufficient to mend the harm which had been done. The power of tradition was still too strong. The successors of the Reformation should have made further progress along the paths which they had begun to follow, *in the return to the spirit of ancient Christianity*; but unfortunately the churches of the Reformation, in their historical development, came to a dead stop all too soon. As a result of this, in their case also, tradition, formalism, hierarchy, *and the abandonment of the social side of life among the people*, became the most powerful influence at work [my emphasis].<sup>4</sup>

Not only was the religious revival to “return to the spirit of ancient Christianity,” an emphasis of sixteenth-century Anabaptism, it was also to impact the “social side of life among the people.” From this point of view, the goals of Friesen’s political organization were very much in keeping with those of the evangelical party. The last plank of Friesen’s political platform, for example, as Terry Martin has observed: “called for ‘the complete realization of the teachings of Jesus Christ’ ” in society. It further advocated “the renunciation forever of any attempts at military conquests and the right of alternative service for conscientious objectors.”<sup>5</sup> Anabaptist/Mennonite beliefs were therefore clearly evident in the platform of Friesen’s political party. Did Russian Baptists and Evangelical Christians agree with all aspects of this platform?<sup>6</sup>

Though the “Frizen Party” soon disbanded after affiliating itself with the Kadets,<sup>7</sup> realizing it could never become a viable political party under

the circumstances, its religious and social goals were not abandoned; the group simply reordered its priorities. Participants must have decided to concentrate on religious revival – indeed, as we have seen, on a national reformation – from which the social changes they desired would follow. Perhaps because of this reorientation, H. J. Braun made a trip to St. Petersburg sometime in late 1907 or early 1908 to enlist Prokhanov's support in a Christian publication venture that would aid and abet the religious renewal. As Prokhanov put it in his autobiography:

In the south of Russia there were settlements of Mennonites, a very old Christian group originating in Holland in the seventeenth century by a converted Roman Catholic priest named Menno Simons. They became very numerous in Holland and emigrated partly to Germany, but mostly to Poland. In the end of the eighteenth century, under Catherine II, they were allowed to migrate to Southern Russia, where they founded flourishing colonies.

Toward the close of the nineteenth century a new group was formed among them, the "Brüdergemeinde" (brothers church), *which resembled the Evangelical Christians very much*.<sup>8</sup> One group of them in one of the colonies had a small publishing enterprise which issued a German Christian paper, "Friedensstimme" (The Voice of Peace). *Their leader, Heinrich Brown* [H. J. Braun], became interested in my work, and came once to St. Petersburg. In the course of our conversation I proposed that we should form an All-Russian publishing company for producing and spreading Russian literature: they should manage all the financial part of the work and I would undertake the literary labor.

Brown and his companions consented to my proposal, and in 1908 the first Russian Protestant Christian (Evangelical) Publishing Association was formed, under the name of "The Rainbow" [Raduga]. *I proposed the name* as a symbol of our activities – a quiet, peaceful labor after the deluge and storm of the revolution (1905). Very soon we opened the first Evangelical Christian book store in the city of St. Petersburg, which became a center of the new religious publishing interests among the Protestant Christians.

This combination proved to be a great success. The Mennonites had their printing plant in their colony in the South of Russia, where they could print very cheaply. The literature was spread through our magazine and book store, by mail and messenger.

My Mennonite companions were occupied with all the financial and other practical matters and I was quite free to do my literary work. "The Rainbow" was able to publish many tracts and books on religious topics. Its calendar, "The Family Friend," became very popular [my emphasis].<sup>9</sup>

Prokhanov makes it appear as though the initiative for this venture came from him. But if that was the case, what was H. J. Braun's purpose in seeking him out? Given Prokhanov's association with P. M. Friesen's political party, his earlier contacts with Kroeker and Braun in 1895, their mutual interest in evangelism, and their association with Baedeker and the greater European Allianz movement, it is equally possible that Braun made the trip to St. Petersburg in order to enlist Prokhanov's help

in expanding MB publications to include Russian Christian materials.<sup>10</sup> Whatever the case, the above encounter obviously produced a meeting of minds on the issues and an agreement to form a larger publication firm, without which the Neufeld printing establishment H. J. Braun and the Kroekers had purchased in 1904 would never have become one of the largest publishers in New Russia and the most important evangelical publishing house in the Russian Empire.<sup>11</sup>

We are fortunate to possess a copy of the Raduga founding document. It was submitted to the Taurida governor in June, 1916 to request that the Raduga Publishing Association be exempted from the liquidation laws directed at commercial enterprises.<sup>12</sup> The document is dated 21 June, 1908<sup>13</sup> and is signed by Heinrich J. Braun, Halbstadt, Isaak P. Regehr, Alexanderkrone, Abram J. Kroeker and David P. Isaak, both of Halbstadt, Peter P. Perk, Bolshoi, and Ivan S. Prokhanov of St. Petersburg. Three of the shareholders – Braun, Kroeker and Isaak – each contributed 25,000 rubles to the venture; the other three, including Prokhanov, contributed 12,500 rubles each. Prokhanov's shares, however, consisted primarily of the monthly magazine, *Khristianin* (The Christian), the weekly *Seyatel* (The Sower), hymn books, four hundred rubles in cash and author copyrights worth 8,500 rubles – the latter included his very successful hymnbook, *Gusli*. Prokhanov was also to receive 125 rubles per month in salary; except for ten per cent that was to go to charity, the other members, however, would divide the profits at the end of every fiscal year in accordance with the amount each had initially contributed. A governing board was elected for three years, with H. J. Braun the Executive Director and D. P. Issak his assistant. Prokhanov became the director and chief editor of the Russian publications, a position for which he was to receive another 1,800 rubles a year in salary. A. J. Kroeker, as editor of German publications, was also to receive a salary of 1,800 rubles per annum. The editorial office for Russian literature would remain in St. Petersburg where Prokhanov lived, but the Raduga Association would also open a store and warehouse there with Prokhanov managing all sales. No time limit was placed on the agreement.<sup>14</sup>

The first steps toward organizing the Raduga Publishing Association must have been taken early in 1908, perhaps around the time that Menonite Church leaders were meeting in Alexanderwohl (7 February, 1908) to decide on a response to the government's apparent non-fulfillment of the promises made in the October Manifesto.<sup>15</sup> For the founding document lists the appraisal of the various partners' property as having taken place on 1 April, 1908. By that time, planning must already have been well underway, perhaps having begun in 1907. Prokhanov does not tell us precisely when H. J. Braun came to visit him

in St. Petersburg. Perhaps the impulse to work with Prokhanov came only after the government had informed the MBs that proselytizing among the Orthodox was forbidden them after, as before, the October Manifesto. The 7 February, 1908, document formulated by Mennonite leaders regarding the "Freedom of Faith and Propaganda," may also have been a response to the above information. Those leaders consisted of both Old Church Mennonites and MBs. But H. J. Braun's decision to seek out Prokhanov must have been a less formal response to the government's message regarding proselytizing even though all directors of the Raduga Publishing Association, with the exception of Prokhanov, were Mennonite Brethren. The latter appear to have decided to attempt to accomplish the work of evangelization through their Russian brethren, as many individual MBs had already been doing before 1905. Thus, whereas the specific outline of the working relationship may have come from Prokhanov, the initiative may well have come from Braun and his partners, for they were seeking ways to accomplish the work of evangelizing among the Russian people without technically violating the country's laws against proselytizing. The *Stundists*, Russian Baptists and Evangelical Christians had, and would continue to evangelize regardless of those laws. And by 1907-1908 Prokhanov was the most visible candidate for such collaboration. Raduga Publications would produce the materials – Russian Bibles, religious literature, tracts, etc. – and the Russian brethren would see to it that they got out to the Russian public. If the MBs as a group could not evangelize among the Russians (although individuals like Jacob Kroeker and others continued to do so<sup>16</sup>), then they would at least participate in the coming reformation through their Russian brothers.<sup>17</sup>

It is interesting in this latter regard to note how Prokhanov and A. J. Kroeker interpreted the name Raduga (rainbow) given to their publishing association. Prokhanov noted that he suggested the name "as a symbol of our activities: a quiet, peaceful labor after the deluge and storm of the (1905) revolution." But Kroeker had a slightly different and perhaps more authentic take on the name. Writing in 1926, he observed that the agreement with Prokhanov had led to the renaming of their publishing firm to "Raduga," to represent the sign of God's covenant with a renewed humanity after the revolution, *to demonstrate God's renewed grace for the expected spiritual awakening in Russia* in which MBs most definitely wished to participate.

Whereas the St. Petersburg authorities clearly rejected the expanded view of religious freedom Mennonites (and especially MBs) advocated, the Duma had not yet addressed the problem. Already in its 29 April, 1906 issue, the *Friedensstimme* reported that a committee of the Constitutional Democratic Party had prepared a document that was to form

the basis of the new law on religious freedom. Mennonites appeared pleased with it.<sup>18</sup> Only four months later, however, on 21 October, 1906, it reported that the Minister of Internal Affairs had been given the responsibility of drawing up a new draft law dealing with the "sects" in Russia.<sup>19</sup> A week later it expressed concern that there was no one in the Duma to represent Mennonite religious interests. Mennonites needed their own representative in that body for they were in danger of being regarded as merely another Protestant group

... and thrown into the same pot with the Lutherans *or to be confused with the Baptists, which could naturally be to our great detriment*. Should this Duma manifest the same desire to reduce everything to a common denominator like the first one did, we can expect, *if we are not on our guard, that we will – one of these days – lose the privileges we hold so dear* [my emphasis].<sup>20</sup>

On 17 October an *ukase* was issued that granted the Russian Orthodox Church and the "sects" the "free expression of their faith and the practice of their religious ceremonies, as well as the creation of religious congregations."<sup>21</sup> This freedom was not extended to "fanatical" (that is, proselytizing) groups, however. The *Friedensstimme* regarded the *ukase* as progress, but it hoped for complete religious freedom where all religious groups would be placed on an equal footing and "religious propaganda" not considered a crime.<sup>22</sup>

On 6 December, 1906 the *Friedensstimme* reported that, according to *Novoe Vremia*, the Department of Religious Affairs was preparing a comprehensive document for submission to the Duma on church affairs and religious freedom. It was to deal with the transfer of church members from one faith to another, religious sects, religious propaganda, and other church and family matters. But no specifics were as yet available. Nevertheless certain events appeared to point in a direction away from greater religious freedom. On 25 August, 1907 the *Friedensstimme* reported on some of these disturbing indicators. For example: a group of Pashkovites near Oserkis had requested, on the basis of the religious freedoms promised on 17 April, 1905, their local chief of police for permission to hold separate religious services. The chief had replied: "The edict of toleration is not determinative for me; rather, the government's circular of 4 March, 1907, which forbids meetings of every kind, is. Understood? I will therefore not allow your meetings." From the chief of police they had appealed to the governor. He had responded: "It is not possible. Just look at the circular: it is clear that only the state church has the right to preach." The *Friedensstimme* continued:

When the toleration edict was issued, it was praised by the bureaucrats and other governmental agencies as proof of the regime's good will. "What do you



want," it was said, "Just look, isn't the government, of its own volition, giving you every freedom, complete freedom of religion! What more do you want?" But our joy was short lived; circulars and explanations were issued, the conversion of a member of the Orthodox Church had to be approved by the governor, and so everything remained as it had been. In reality, therefore, the choice of religions, now as before, is determined on the basis of these circulars and the decisions of the chiefs of police and governors. The declaration on this topic given to a member of the "Slovo" by a governmental representative was typical.

"For us," said the bureaucrat, "the ukases are not of first importance; for us the explanations and circulars are determinative . . . Furthermore – you speak of religious freedom. All our laws are saturated with the spirit of tolerance and the Imperial Decree of 17 April introduced nothing new here. Indeed, who could have anything against religious toleration? But – once again there are important exceptions where we must ignore the edict of toleration and act in accord with the circulars and explanations. Pay attention, my friend, Russia is not ruled by imperial edicts but by means of the circulars. Imperial edicts are – how shall I express myself – like poetry; real life, however, is contained in the circulars."<sup>23</sup>

Witte's statement to Sir Bernard Pares was being confirmed: the April declaration on religious toleration and the October, 1905 Imperial Manifesto, issued to an aroused populace, had been a temporary expedient. The government had never intended to fulfill the promises made.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, as soon as it believed itself safe once more, it "spit on the constitution;"<sup>25</sup> not openly, to be sure, but nonetheless systematically. Yet, as Orlando Figes has written:

The Russian people – and many of the non-Russians too – won new political freedoms in 1905 and these could not simply be withdrawn once the regime had regained its grip on power. The boom in newspapers and journals, the convocation of the Duma, the formation of political parties and the growth of public institutions – all these ensured that politics could no longer be the state's exclusive preserve but would have to be openly discussed, even if the real levers of power remained firmly in the hands of the Tsar.<sup>26</sup>

In the context described by Figes it was indeed more difficult for the government to move openly against the Russian people; easier, however, to move against foreign minorities like the Mennonites who had no voice in the new public institutions. This is why, from the very inception of the Duma, Abraham Kroeker, editor of the *Friedensstimme*, promoted the election of a Mennonite representative to that body. But even with such a representative present in the Duma, what could he or the Mennonites as a small group accomplish in a body where the vast majority of its members did not share their concerns, especially Mennonite religious concerns such as exemption from military service?

Assuming that the St. Petersburg government probably regarded all Protestants as sectarians, Kroeker, in an editorial of 22 September, 1907

once more called for the election of "a German, the Mennonites a Mennonite representative." He spoke of the responsibility and indeed the calling the Mennonites had to strengthen the "constitutional center."<sup>27</sup> Such a representative, in the person of H. A. Bergmann, was elected to the third Duma which was convened in November, 1907. No sooner was he in place than he, as a member of the Duma's committee on religion, informed Bishops Isaak Dyck and Abraham Goerz of the Minister of Internal Affairs' legislative project regarding the religion of foreign settlers.<sup>28</sup> Whatever he told the bishops was enough to alarm them to the extent that they made a trip to St. Petersburg and, upon their return, convened a meeting of the church leaders of the Molotschna Mennonite churches in Alexanderwohl on 7 February, 1908. Some twenty-three bishops and ministers attended. There the group drew up a document consisting of four main points which Bergmann took with him to the Duma and presented to the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Clearly reflecting the growing possibility of having their status changed from that of a confession to that of a sect, the first point of the document, entitled: "The Mennonite Position on the Issue of Propaganda and Religious Freedom," emphasized that the law of the land had, from the very outset of their stay in Russia, granted the Mennonites, along with the Reformed and other Protestant groups, the status of a confession/denomination. But the draft law on religious freedom prepared by the Minister of Internal Affairs now referred to them as a "sect." They regarded the implications of such a change with consternation; but nowhere did they as yet connect it overtly with a loss of their military exemption. Secondly, they argued – clearly still believing that they had entered a new era of religious liberty – that, according to Christ's Great Commission, it was the duty of every Christian to spread the Gospel. Thirdly, however, they asserted that Mennonites did not actively "propagandize" among Christians of other confessions. Fourthly, reflecting the "Frizen" Party's platform statement, they were thoroughly convinced that the propagation of the Gospel in its original purity and simplicity alone would not only lead humans to eternal salvation, but also to a new social order here on earth. Such a new social order could only result in the more firm establishment of the Russian throne.<sup>29</sup>

The meeting was chaired by Bishop Heinrich Unruh of Muntau, but P. M. Friesen, whose name stands at the end of the list of the twenty-three Molotschna church leaders, appears to have written the document. It is a somewhat curious piece for it clearly rejects the sectarian label for all Mennonites, including MBs and Evangelical (Allianz) Mennonites. Yet Old Church Mennonites had declared MBs to be a sect in the past, and some would do so again in the not too distant future. Many of the former also suspected that MB proselytizing among their

Russian Orthodox workers, their support of *Stundist* and Russian Baptist evangelism, and their cooperation with the Baptists who had held the status of a sect in Russia, endangered all Mennonites. Hence, on the one hand, the rejection of the sectarian label; on the other hand, however, the desire to remain true to Christ's Great Commission while denying that they were involved in any propagandistic activity among other Christian groups.

On 8 February, 1908, *Der Botschafter* carried a report from Bergmann on the proposed law, and another report on the Duma commission established to evaluate it.<sup>30</sup> A further article, entitled "Concerning Freedom of Religion," appeared in its 8 December, 1908 publication. The latter carried a complete enumeration of the groups that were to be listed under "Christian Churches," "non-Orthodox Confessions," and "Protestant Sects." The third category consisted of four groups, the last two being: "3) the Mennonites and 4) the Baptists." David H Epp, who wrote the report, concluded:

As far as the exceptional status of the Mennonites is concerned, the recommendations of the ministry are based, as far as I can discover at the moment, only on the following point:

"28 February, 1907, No. 1479, page 28 . . . The following is to be added, as a supplement, to the existing laws: No one may renounce (or refuse to fulfill) his civic or political obligations on the basis of his religious convictions, with the exception of those that have been specifically mentioned in the law."<sup>31</sup>

Two aspects of the above report deserve to be singled out. The first is that the *Mennonites*, not only the MBs, *and Baptists* [my emphasis] are categorized as "sects" in opposition to their prior status. Russian or Ukrainian Baptists, as we have noted, had never enjoyed the status of a confession in Russia, so they were not affected, but their German counterparts were. MBs had initially been called a sect both by their Mennonite brothers and by government authorities. And they had at least flirted with, if not become engaged to, the German Baptists and intimately connected to the Ukrainian Baptists. But were now all Mennonites to be transferred to that category contrary to the status accorded them in the great *Privilegium* and the law of the land? Who was responsible for this: the MBs with their religious propaganda and close ties to the Baptists? That thought, as the sequel will demonstrate, certainly crossed the minds of many an Old Church Mennonite, perhaps even some MBs.

But why should the Russian government wish to change the religious status of all the Mennonites to that of a sect at this particular point in time? The answer, as related events would begin to reveal, would appear to be contained in the "supplement" to the Russian law

cited by David H. Epp: that exemption from civic and political obligations would not be extended to any group because of religious conviction unless specifically granted in the law. Here was the rub for the Tsarist government: Mennonites had in fact been granted such an exemption from military service in the law when they first arrived in the country. The government had attempted to remove this exemption in the early 1870s, but had failed. Was it for this reason, as the 1910 "Explanatory Supplement" noted that the "14 May, 1875 supplement on the Mennonites to the Military law, P. 179, vol. IV," had referred to them as a sect?<sup>32</sup> Did the government give up on the attempt to force Mennonites into military service after 1875? Perhaps, but only until after the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 when the 1905 October Manifesto, contrary to everything Mennonites could have anticipated from the promise of religious freedom, gave the government an opportunity to revisit the issue because its promise had to be enshrined in a concrete new law. And crown ministers were about to introduce such a new law in the Duma. In the process of preparing that law, the Tsarist government appears to have decided to remove the Mennonite exemption from military service once and for all, but not in a forthright manner.<sup>33</sup> It would categorize Mennonites as a sect and thereby automatically eliminate their special privileges. Would the government have attempted to do this had MBs not broken with the Russian Mennonite Church and associated themselves so closely with the Baptists? Were the actions of the MBs coming back to haunt all Russian Mennonites?

Whatever the case, Russian Mennonite leaders were becoming increasingly uneasy. And the information routinely fed them by H. A. Bergmann, their Duma representative and member of the committee on religion, cannot have alleviated their apprehensions. Articles in the *Friedensstimme* reflect this growing unease. The 4 April, 1909 issue contained a warning that the Orthodox Church, bureaucrats, and extreme right nationalists were doing everything in their power to undermine the October, Manifesto.<sup>34</sup> On 16 May it carried a report of "mass arrests" of Russian Evangelicals who were attending the annual conference of Russian Baptists in Odessa.<sup>35</sup> A week later the editorial dealt with the proposed new law concerning religious rights and privileges of the so-called "Old Believers"<sup>36</sup> who had separated from the Russian Orthodox Church in the mid seventeenth century.<sup>37</sup> With regard to the latter, one of the issues discussed in the Duma was whether or not these "Old Believers" were to have the same right of religious propaganda as the Orthodox State Church. The 6 June issue then reported on a story in the *St. Petersburg Zeitung* which indicated that the discussion on that point had been extended to include all non-Orthodox groups in Russia. The writer, from the Evangelical Lutheran Church,

pointed out the dangers to his church, especially in localities that contained "mixed populations." If such rights were not granted to everyone then the police retained the right to intervene at will.<sup>38</sup> And on 13 June the paper brought the story of two MB leaders – A. H. Unruh and a Gerhard Froese – who had been imprisoned for thirty days by the authorities because they had held public meetings without first acquiring the "required" permission from the local governing authorities.<sup>39</sup>

On 17 October, 1909 the *Friedensstimme* – citing the *St. Petersburg Zeitung* as source – reported that the government had withdrawn its various draft proposals, some seven in number, that dealt with matters affecting religious liberty. Coinciding almost exactly with the Department of Religion's demand of 9 October, 1909 for an investigation of sectarian activity in Halbstadt, this action was not taken in order to strengthen the freedoms to be granted. On the contrary, the apparent reason for doing so was that the ministry had changed its mind on a number of issues; its more liberal proposals conceived in the wake of the 1905 Revolution were to be withdrawn and the old, more restrictive, measures reimposed.<sup>40</sup>

Perhaps it was this withdrawal, and the intent behind it, that mobilized Russian Mennonite leaders to more united action. The Molotschna church leaders, both Old Church and MBs, had already met as a group on 7 February, 1908 to coordinate their response to the government. But Mennonites had no mechanism, no institution, by means of which to institutionalize such a coordinated and united Mennonite response to the threat posed to their rights and privileges by the government's action. To rectify this matter, Old Church Mennonites and MBs got together in Schönwiese on 28 January, 1910 in what P. M. Friesen terms a general meeting of the Mennonite Church Leadership (*Gemeinsames Mennonitisches Kirchen Konvent*). Though Friesen does not say so, MBs were probably invited to this meeting, as they had been to the more local earlier one in Halbstadt, because of the threat to all Mennonites in Russia. Otherwise H. J. Braun would not have been elected one of the deputies to treat with the St. Petersburg government on religious matters. Bishops Isaak Dyck and Abraham Goerz, both from the Old Church, had already been involved as temporary deputies, along with H. A. Bergmann, in 1908. But in early 1910 Dyck had taken ill and so David H. Epp was elected to represent him for the time being at Schönwiese. Epp, along with Goerz and Braun, were then duly appointed to represent all Russian Mennonites in religious matters by the first General Conference of Mennonites in Russia meeting at Schönsee on 26-28 October, 1910.<sup>41</sup>

It was at Schönsee as well that the second document printed in the 1910 *Dokumente*, the "Explanatory Supplement to the Declaration [of

1908]: 'The Mennonite Position on the Issue of Propaganda and Religious Freedom,'" was adopted as the official Mennonite statement on the subject. Written by Abraham Goerz and P. M. Friesen, and presented at Schönwiese as the official position of the Molotschna Mennonite *Kirchenkonvent*, it was to be presented to the Ministry of Internal Affairs' Department of Religious Affairs by the newly elected deputies accompanied by H. A. Bergmann.

The "Explanatory Supplement" began by noting that Russian Mennonites had, since coming into the land, been accorded the status of a confession in the law. The only exception to this was contained in the Military law of 1875, which had referred to them as a sect. Generally, the document stated, they had been listed along with the Reformed and Lutheran Churches as confessions. In Russian law, the document explained, "sect" referred only to those groups that had broken with the Orthodox Church, all other religious groups were called "confessions." According to this explanation, therefore, a group that had broken away from one of these Protestant Confessions – say from the Mennonite Church as the MBs had in 1860 – could or would not be considered a sect by the government. But this had clearly not been the case, nor had most of the Mennonite Church leaders of the time regarded MBs as a legitimate "confession." The document assiduously avoided any mention of the MB schism, however. Instead, the long history of the Mennonites, going back beyond even Menno Simons, was touted (though Keller's theory is not alluded to) as legitimating the Mennonite Church. Furthermore, the document emphasized the conformity of the Church's practices with those of the Primitive Church and argued that these practices had been in place when the Mennonites had entered the Tsarist Empire.

In its second section, the document dealt with the Mennonite ministers, their education and duties within the Church, the two "sacraments" of baptism and communion, and the organizational structure of church and conference. Within this structure, the ultimate decision-making body was the local *Bruderschaft* meeting. Differences from more hierarchically organized church governments were duly noted. This was followed by a very brief paragraph on religious freedom in which the authors observed:

In our opinion, true religious freedom in the full sense of the term exists when every individual is given the opportunity to practice his religion in accordance with his mature convictions, and we are convinced that the human soul, in its search for peace, cannot be quieted or satisfied by either coercion or compulsory regulations. *The Imperial Manifestos of 17 April and 17 October, 1905 justify our hope that such religious freedom has been granted* [my emphasis].<sup>42</sup>

The document concluded with a section on religious propaganda which was introduced by a quotation from the draft proposal on the subject by the Minister of Internal Affairs to the effect that it was the natural tendency of any religious community to regard its teachings as alone correct and those of others as in error. Because of this, all religious groups held it to be their moral duty to proclaim their "truth" to others. Mennonites, too, held this to be the case in their own religion, but they nevertheless believed that all Christian confessions contained the essential Christian truths if they held Christ to be the Son of God and that His shed blood cleansed sinners from their guilt, empowering them to live a new life. They recognized the existence of a "universal Christian Church" and the fact that there were true believers in virtually all confessions. No one was perfect, however, and they admitted to shortcomings in their own midst. Nevertheless, they looked forward to the time when every true Christian would be united in Christ and no undue restriction placed upon anyone.

Therefore, the document continued,

every form of propaganda among other Christian confessions as described in the draft law of the Minister of Internal Affairs is foreign to us, and we cannot therefore in good conscience deny admission to our fellowship to persons of other faiths if, through mature personal consideration and conviction, they desire to join it. We seek to fulfill our obligation as given in Christ's command: "Preach the Gospel to all creatures" (Mark 16: 15), in a broader context, primarily by disseminating the Holy Scriptures to all people through Bible societies, both evangelical and Russian, supported by our free will offerings. Indeed, we support the evangelical work everywhere and in every possible manner where we are invited to do so. Missionary activity – propaganda in the true sense of the word – is only carried on by us among non-Christian people.<sup>43</sup>

This document, along with the original 1908 "The Mennonite Position," was presented to the Minister of Internal Affairs either on 4 or 5 March, 1910 by the three deputies accompanied by H. A. Bergmann.

In its 17 March, 1910 issue, the *Friedensstimme* brought a lengthy report on that meeting in St. Petersburg which was actually a series of meetings lasting from 4 to 8 March. Those meetings took place while the very people the delegates were dealing with were negotiating the investigation of Raduga and the "Rückenau Baptists." In the first of those meetings, the deputies wasted no time in expressing their concern over the draft law on religious matters making its way through the Duma. Mennonites were afraid, the deputies informed the head of the Department of Religious Affairs, that they "could lose our religious privileges and be limited in the expression of our faith." Kharusin, the department head, sought to reassure them, saying the new law would in no way diminish

their rights; the government was simply seeking to legalize those rights. Thus far, he continued, Mennonites had been tolerated as nearly independent congregations, now they were to be legally recognized. Surely, this was both necessary and in their best interest. But nothing could be done in this regard until the new law dealing with foreign confessions of Russian subjects had been enacted. In any case, Mennonites would not be classified as a "sect." However, if Mennonites desired the status of a "confession," all Russian Mennonites would have to band together to form some kind of union with a governing body legally empowered to speak for them as a whole. This, too, would have to be done in a legally binding form and manner. Were they to do this, every individual congregation, as well as the confession/denomination itself, would be recognized as a juridical entity. Once again, Kharusin sought to reassure the deputies that none of their rights were to be taken from them in the process. Yet, in another context he warned them that "the time of our isolation was, once and for all, over."

The next day, 5 March, the deputies had another meeting in the department, this time with a subordinate, Councilor Pavlov. Again they broached the "sectarian" issue, enquiring how far down the ladder, to the bishops and ministers, governmental control intended to reach. But Pavlov assured them that the government was not interested in the Mennonites' internal affairs, except in the case of the person(s) keeping the church registers. Nor could it force an organization, similar to the Lutheran Church's consistory, upon them. Pavlov left no doubt, however, that the government desired some kind of an ecclesiastical structure for the various virtually independent Mennonite congregations which would represent all congregations and with which it could negotiate directly.

On 6 March the deputies met with P. W. Kamensky,<sup>44</sup> head of the Duma committee dealing with religious matters in that body. He, too, sought to reassure them that their privileges were not to be diminished in any way. Nevertheless, his explanation of the sect/confession issue implied that Mennonites would be better off under the latter category. Not that the government was attempting to push them in this direction; he did argue, however, that "the main difference between a 'confession' and a 'congregation' or 'fellowship' would consist in the fact that the spiritual leaders of a confession would be able to speak, in an official capacity, as church representatives; those of a congregation or fellowship would not." Whatever Mennonites decided to do in this matter would not affect their status, however, since the sectarian category was to be completely eliminated in the revised projected law.

Clearly, the deputies had not achieved their goal, namely "to petition the Ministry of Internal Affairs formally to assign us to the category



of a confession, especially since we have enjoyed the freedoms associated with that status in an extended form for over one hundred years." And yet the repeated assurances given them by the head of the department, his deputy, and the Duma representative had assuaged their fears at least to the extent that they could leave it up to a future general conference "to determine whether, given these circumstances, we even want to be added to the list of confessions."<sup>45</sup>

There is one other aspect of this second Russian Mennonite representation to the government on the sect/confession issue that merits attention. Thus far, we have discussed two documents in the above connection: the 1908 "The Mennonite Position on the Issue of Propaganda and Religious Freedom," and the January, 1910 Schönwiese generated "Explanatory Supplement" to the first. These appear to have been "official" inter-Mennonite documents to be used by the deputies in their representation to the Tsarist government. But the published collection of these *Dokumente* contains a third piece entitled: "Concerning the History of the Origin of the Mennonites."<sup>46</sup> The latter, undoubtedly written by David H. Epp as we argued in chapter 4, appears to have been given to Councilor Pavlov, for the report notes: "On Monday, 8 March [the last day], we went again to the Department of Religious Affairs for Foreign Confessions, in order to give Mr. Pavlov some historical material . . ."<sup>47</sup> Why had this document not been given to officials earlier along with the other two pieces? Had Epp brought it along, or did he write it while in St. Petersburg? Had it been discussed at the conference, or did he discuss it only with the other two delegates in St. Petersburg? Perhaps he did only the latter, because it was subsequently published along with the other two documents by H. J. Braun's Raduga press. In his account of this representation to the ministry, P. M. Friesen reproduces the first two documents in full, both of which he at the very least had a hand in writing; but he says nothing at all about the third. Surely he must have been aware of it. Did he believe that this third document had never been officially adopted as a general Mennonite statement? David H. Epp does appear to have acted on his own in presenting it to Pavlov. On the other hand, Friesen's possible opposition to the document may have been triggered by his rejection of Keller's interpretation which permeated the whole, a rejection implied by the fact that he alone of all Russian Mennonite writers never once mentioned Keller in his massive history. Or was there some animosity between himself and Epp? Whatever the case, Epp's history presented a classic argument against labeling the Mennonites a sect, an argument that had been anticipated by some of Keller's Prussian Mennonite enthusiasts.

In his tract on Mennonite origins Epp, too, began with the Ministry of Internal Affairs's draft law of 23 February, 1907 where "the following

churches are listed as confessions: the Roman Catholic, the Evangelical Lutheran, the Reformed and others; the Mennonites, however, in P. III, Section 3, are listed under sects, even though this flies in the face of the existing laws." But Epp went beyond a legal argument, stating that the above clarification also flew in the face of the historical evidence. Having made the point, Epp proceeded to a definition of the word "sect."

In the Greek original, Epp argued, the term had referred to differing political or philosophical schools. Later, in the Early Church, however, it had taken on a negative connotation and was used to designate individuals or groups that had broken with the Church over issues of religious doctrine. Gradually it had become combined with the Greek term "Airesis" – heresy – and was so used already in the New Testament. The Church's teachings were regarded as orthodox; those of the splinter groups, as heterodox. Epp then presented the key historical evidence in favor of his argument.

The Mennonite Church," he asserted, "is not, however, an illegitimate branch of any church or church fellowship, as Büchner understands the term 'sect,' and, more importantly, our doctrine is not heresy in the New Testament sense of the term. It is unnecessary to prove the latter assertion, for anyone who wishes to do so can convince himself, on the basis of our catechism, that our Christian teachings are consonant with the teachings of the Gospel. As proof of the fact that our church is not a branch of some other now existing church, as many have erroneously assumed until now, but in contrast has the right to be recognized as an historically independent body, we can now present irrefutable factual evidence, on the basis of which we can, without fear of exaggeration, assert the following: the Christian tradition [*Glaubensrichtung*] to which the Mennonites adhere, existed in the Universal Christian Church earlier than the Lutheran or Reformed Churches, as has been proven by the historian Dr. L. Keller, among others, on the basis of a great number of documents which he has gathered through great effort and exploited in his works. His views occasioned doubts in many [scholars] and many rose up to oppose Keller, *but no one was able to undermine the veracity of the evidence he laid bare*. [Dr. L. Keller: 1. *Geschichte der Wiedertäufer und ihres reiches zu Münster* (Münster, 1880); 2. *Hans Denck, ein Apostel der Wiedertäufer* (Leipzig, 1882); 3. *Die Reformation und die Reformparteien* [sic] (Leipzig, 1885); 4. *Die Waldenser und die deutschen Bibelübersetzungen* (Leipzig, 1888); 5. *Zur Geschichte der Alt-Evangelischen Gemeinden* (Berlin, 1887)]

One only needs to direct his attention to the Mennonites' articles of faith and their church-congregational organization to become fully aware of the extent to which their teachings and ceremonies differ from those of other evangelical confessions. Adult baptism, the teaching on communion, the rejection of the oath and the teaching of nonresistance, as well as the democratic congregational organization can all be cited as outstanding characteristic aspects of this fact.<sup>48</sup>

Thereupon Epp reiterated all of those aspects related to Keller's interpretation we have become acquainted with: that Menno had not been

the founder of a new church, but merely the reformer of an ancient Christian tradition; that this tradition had originated in the first Christian centuries and therefore had the right to be considered the "only true church";<sup>49</sup> that the groups involved had been called by different names at different times and countries; that they had suffered severe persecution over the centuries; that the Code of Justinian had clearly referred to them, etc. Epp concluded by remarking:

Drawing all these strands together, we must come to the conclusion that Mennonites do not constitute a sect in the sense in which the word is today used in Church History. They never seceded [from any church] nor can they point to any specific founder of their movement; but they can point to a very specific and ancient confession of faith which unites the present day Mennonite congregations even though there may be differences among them.<sup>50</sup>

A magnificent argument, but built on sand as time would make apparent, or perhaps as Epp already suspected. Was P. M. Friesen convinced of its veracity, or did he have doubts, perhaps serious doubts about Keller's scholarship? Was he a good enough historian to believe that the Keller skeptics alluded to by Epp could not be so easily dismissed? Had he perhaps read some of them? Or did he know enough about the Orthodox Church and Pobedenostsev's views to recognize that such an interpretation might simply irritate the officials in the Department of Religious Affairs? Or was it that he remained unaware of Epp's document since it was never officially adopted by the General Conference and his study was about to go to press? Friesen did not say.



## Church and State Against the Covenant: The Investigation of “Raduga”

*Much more serious and problematic was the governor's investigation of Raduga, the largest Mennonite publishing firm in Russia, made on the authority of a command from on high because of its propagandistic activity in word and print designed to support Russian preachers in their missionary activity among their people. To be sure, this large firm did not only have a tremendous influence upon the larger [Russian] Mennonite community; it also influenced the Russian Baptists and Evangelical Christians. The preacher Prokhanov, leading personality in these last two groups, was also a member of [Raduga's] Board of Directors . . . this event was not publicized either in the Mennonite press or in the MB congregations. It took place only a few years before the outbreak of World War I, where the world – in 1914 – erupted in flames that have not been extinguished to this day. And what was the reason for the investigation? The governor, naturally, did not divulge one. Might it have been one last attempt not only to destroy Raduga, but also to attack the MB Church by labeling it “Baptist”?*

— Anonymous

Hardly had the deputies returned from St. Petersburg than an event occurred in Halbstadt that would place the government's assurances in doubt and resurrect one of the issues that had in the past, and would again in the future, divide the Old Church Mennonites from the MBs. It was reported in the 11 May, 1910 issue of the *Mennonitische Rundschau* by H. Unruh, Bishop of Muntau, and a major player in the events of the day as we have seen. The report was dated March, 1910.<sup>1</sup> On 19 March, 1910 the Vice Governor of the Taurida District, together with the district chief of police, the director of the public schools,<sup>2</sup> a Russian Orthodox cleric, and the entire corps of the local constabulary, had arrived in town, leaving only on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Unruh surmised that this massive invasion by the Russian authorities had something to do with the Bible conferences held in the Halbstadt *Vereinshaus*<sup>3</sup> – at times with foreign speakers – and with the Raduga press which, in the pages of the *Friedensstimme*, solicited monetary gifts to support evangelism among Russians and regularly reported on such activity.<sup>4</sup>

The investigation appears to have been triggered by Stolypin himself who was appointed Minister of Internal Affairs in April, 1906.<sup>5</sup> In July of the same year, Nicholas II appointed him Prime Minister, or head of the Council of Ministers. Yet he retained the office of Minister of Internal Affairs through to his assassination in September of 1911 so that the policies that underlay the investigation must have been those of Stolypin. Prior to his becoming Minister of Internal Affairs, Stolypin had since 1903 been governor of the province of Saratov. Perhaps it was there he first encountered Mennonites and other German colonists.<sup>6</sup> Whatever the case, as a governor himself for a time, he must have been fully aware of the occasional collusion between the Tsar and the noble governors against the institutions of government in St. Petersburg.<sup>7</sup> As we shall see, he was a great proponent of land reform in the country; but he could also be ruthless in his suppression of insurrection and what he conceived to be transgressions of the strict letter of the law. Witte, whom he succeeded, argued that Stolypin, while professing to believe in the 17 April and 17 October Manifestos, "did whatever suited his interests." Whereas some scholars argue that he sought to introduce legislation in the Duma "to ease discrimination against religious minorities," especially Old Believers and Jews,<sup>8</sup> others state categorically that "he discriminated against the Jews and the Poles."<sup>9</sup> His most recent biographer, Abraham Asher, however, paints a more favorable picture of Stolypin, arguing that he was a deeply religious man who sought to maintain the prerogatives of the Orthodox Church.<sup>10</sup> It may well have been Stolypin himself, who, as Minister of Internal Affairs, appointed men like S. I. Bondar who were to keep him informed of the religious activities of the Halbstadt Mennonites.<sup>11</sup> Johann Willms later called Bondar the "almost always present [government] supervisory official at the general conferences of our churches."<sup>12</sup> Everyone who mentions Bondar's name refers to him as a *Ministerialbeamten* (a government official). Whether this is a reference to the Ministry of Internal Affairs or Stolypin's office of Prime Minister is never specified. Perhaps the Mennonites themselves did not know. At any rate, as Peter Braun observed, governmental reaction set in in full force at the beginning of 1909,<sup>13</sup> and Bondar's presence at the Mennonite General Conferences may have been one of the consequences of this reaction. It is certain that the investigation of H. J. Braun and Raduga was such a consequence.

On 8 October, 1909 the Governor of Taurida received a letter from the Department of Religious Affairs signed by the very Pavlov, with whom members of the *KfK* were to deal in early March, 1910, and A. Kharuzin, designated here as a Steward of the Court. Clearly instigated by a report written by Bondar – it was attached to the letter – Pavlov and Kharuzin demanded to know why the governor had never investigated

the activities of the Halbstadt Mennonite Youth Association established with ministry approval in 1904.<sup>14</sup> The ministry had, the letter asserted, "received unofficial information that this very association is in reality an umbrella organization for an illegal six-course school training sectarian preachers." The ministry was unhappy about the fact that it had never received any information from the governor about "the possible dangers of this association." It demanded that the matter be investigated.<sup>15</sup>

On 20 November, 1909 Pavlov sent another letter to the Taurida governor demanding that he speed up registering "Mennonite sectarian schools."<sup>16</sup> Finally, on 4 January, 1910 the governor responded. He stated that he had requested the Melitopol school supervisor to conduct a thorough investigation of the problem. Because of the "sectarian" nature of the issue, he had enlisted the help of Margaritiv,<sup>17</sup> who held a Master of Theology degree and was Supervisor of Taurida Schools, to assist him. Through his agents, the latter had conducted secret interviews in Halbstadt with a number of Mennonites as well as Russian Orthodox, including "workers at the Braun printing shop" and the local priest.

Gustav Hein, a resident of Prischib and one of the persons interviewed, knew about the association and observed that it had its own building where Baptist preachers preached to Russian young people. These groups also met secretly, for Halbstadt, he said, had a very active Baptist community. But a local Russian by the name of Luzanov said he knew nothing of such an association, or of its alleged activities. He did say, however, that he worked at the printing shop "of the most raging Baptist," obviously H. J. Braun. He also knew of the activities in the *Vereinshaus* where preachers, who spoke Russian, tried to convert Russian workers who had been encouraged to attend. H. J. Braun, he said, was one of these. Nekrasov, the local Orthodox priest, knew of the Mennonite Youth Association but was not aware of the fact that there was a great deal of "Baptist" activity in the town. He had remained largely in the dark about these activities because the German-speaking inhabitants avoided him and did not speak to him. He knew only that when he had tried to open a school for young Russian children, the town had refused him. The Melitopol school supervisor, too, found that the residents refused to talk to him. He had nevertheless discovered that the six-class school for the training of preachers to the Russians did not exist. According to him, the Association had started a religious revival among Mennonites in the area that was reaching out into the Russian and Jewish populations. The purpose of this activity, he said, was to Germanize the Russian population through conversion to baptism.<sup>18</sup> Margaritov himself, however, had found no proof for the existence of sectarian preachers, nor had he been able to locate any

courses where such preachers were being trained. Nor did anyone in the Central School know anything about them. If they existed, Margaritov had proclaimed, it must be "in deepest secrecy." The Association, too, if it existed, did so secretly and should therefore be closed down. Only the Berdiansk supervisor seems to have interviewed a number of local Mennonites. These told him that the Mennonite Youth Association, established in 1904, had died before it ever got off the ground. Some had informed him about "short Bible courses" conducted from time to time by Swiss and English Baptist preachers in the *Vereinshaus*; sometimes catechism classes were held there in preparation for baptism on Pentecost Sunday. But there was nothing sinister or even irregular in all this. Nonetheless, Stefanov, the Central School supervisor, and Luzanov did say that seasonal Russian workers were encouraged to attend meetings of the "Mennonite Baptists." Such seasonal workers could number up to 2000 in the summer months, and they gladly went to listen to the "Baptist" preachers because that meant time off from work. But the "Baptists" did not invite the local, full-time workers to these meetings. From all of this the governor concluded "that even though the six-course program for sectarian preachers does not exist and the Mennonite Youth Association has abandoned its goals, its sole purpose [nevertheless] is to propagate Baptism among the local population. Therefore it is necessary to close down the Association."<sup>19</sup> He attached a copy of the original charter of the Association to his report. One of the conditions for its continued existence was, he said, that it report annually to him on its activities. Since this had never been done it could be legally closed down, and he so recommended.

Bondar wrote another report to the Ministry in the aftermath of the governor's report. In light of that report, and assuming that the Association operated in secrecy – since it did not exist and therefore had not sent in any annual reports – Bondar argued that, because of H. J. Braun's central role in these matters, he was "testing the government's attitude, probing whether such schools might be legalized." Secondly, Bondar continued, the school clearly operated in secret, giving only the occasional public course, and yet the governor had done nothing to monitor what was going on until the ministry had compelled him. Obviously, neither the governor nor the local police cared much about what was going on in Halbstadt.<sup>20</sup>

On 3 March, 1910 Stolypin himself wrote to the Taurida governor. In light of the correspondence on the matter before him, he said, he had come to the following conclusions:

From Your Excellency's report it is clear that no illegal sectarian courses were detected in the Ministry approved Mennonite Youth Association, and that some



legal short courses did take place. Because of the illegal activity of this society and its failure to report annually, Your Excellency has decided to close it down. *I, however, hold certain factual evidence, proving that Halbstadt indeed hosts a secret sectarian school organization*, functioning outside of the government's control. It is evident that such an organization cannot function as a legal school and [therefore] does so in secret. The courses did occur systematically last year. However, the presence of these courses was completely ignored by the administrative and educational authorities [my emphasis]. . . .

What was going on in Halbstadt, he asserted, was "one of the most vital expressions of the sectarian movement in the country."

From Halbstadt, Stolypin turned to the Molokan seminary in Astrakhanka founded by Zakharov, a wealthy Duma representative, and the Baptist congress that had just been held there. Stolypin complained of sloppy police surveillance, and reporting on the congress contending that the local gubernia authorities were not taking such matters seriously enough, if at all. He expressed the reasons for his concern.

In recent years [he argued] a powerful movement of rationalist teaching<sup>21</sup> has swept through the country, especially the gubernii of European South Russia, seeking to gain adherents among the Orthodox. All administrative organs, both local and central, must therefore monitor sectarian movements and their activities to make sure that these sectarians do not overstep their legal limits and do not appropriate extra privileges and rights aside from those the law extends to them.

Stolypin then called for a more thorough investigation of the January Halbstadt Bible courses, where and when they had been held, who had taught them, what had been taught and how many persons had attended. He also wished to know if there was any connection between these courses and the Halbstadt Mennonite Youth Association, what the real status of the latter was, and the reasons why it had not complied with the law.<sup>22</sup> And so, on 19 March, the Vice Governor of Taurida had made his appearance in Halbstadt to investigate, personally, the activities of an organization that had been defunct since shortly after its inception. He came to investigate the activities surrounding the *Vereinshaus*, Raduga and H. J. Braun himself: that "most raging of Baptists."

In the extended interrogations that took place in Halbstadt from 19 to 22 March, 1910, Unruh reported, the authorities had time and again returned to two issues: the *Vereinshaus*<sup>23</sup> and the Rückenau MB Church. H. J. Braun was a preacher in the latter as well as a principal owner and director of Raduga. It was under his name that the solicitation notices went out; he must have been heavily involved in the work with the Russian Baptists. With regard to the Rückenau MB Church, the authorities wished to determine whether its members were "Mennonites or

Baptists, and with whom they had communion fellowship, etc., etc." Unruh conceded that for some time the *Vereinshaus* had been used by the Russian Baptists for their local services – sometimes these services had even been led by Germans – but this had all been done with the express approval of the Taurida governor. Nonetheless, upon his departure, the vice governor had, according to Unruh's report, uttered the following ominous warning:

We know that the Rückenauers [MBs] are not Mennonites but Baptists, and that they are actively trying to convert Russians. Tell your congregations, and especially the Rückenauers, that this is a very dangerous business. Our church, the ruling church, leaves the Mennonites – as well as all the other existing churches and religious fellowships – alone.

Don't send any missionaries out to lead them [the Russian Orthodox] away from their faith, for she too wants to be left in peace!! If you do not heed my warning, your congregations could suffer dire consequences.<sup>24</sup>

In a later reference to this incident Braun was to assert that he personally, and Raduga collectively, had been cleared by the vice governor of all culpability in what they were doing. But Abraham Kroeker, at the time editor of the *Friedensstimme* and therefore an eyewitness to the event, in an article written in 1926 entitled: "Der Regenbogen" (The Rainbow), casts a somewhat different light on what happened. There Kroeker reported that in 1908 they<sup>25</sup> had joined forces with Prochanov, "one of the most outstanding representatives of the [Russian] 'Evangelical Christians.'" An affiliate of the press was established in St. Petersburg, a Christian periodical in the Russian language published, and the Russian [missionary] work pursued more energetically than before." They had also renamed the publishing firm about this time, calling it "Raduga" (rainbow) to represent the sign of God's covenant with a renewed humanity; to demonstrate God's renewed grace for the expected coming spiritual awakening in Russia in which MBs clearly wished to participate.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, a Christian tract committee had been organized, later known as the 'Philadelphia Society', to work in cooperation with the press to develop Russian language religious tracts. These were to be handed out free of charge where and when the oral proclamation of the Gospel took place. David J. Dick, a wealthy landowner, had chaired the Philadelphia Society and provided much of the capital for its operation. If we now combine the above with the fact, as reported by Abraham Braun, that the MB Church had at its convention in 1906 elected "a committee for evangelization among the Russians," it becomes clear that at least the MBs thought a new day had dawned for them in terms of religious liberty in which they could freely propagate the gospel.

No sooner had this work begun than the government's reaction had set in, with the Russian Orthodox Church once again beginning to defend its privileged status more aggressively. Russian Evangelicals came under closer scrutiny, as did MBs because of their presumed association with them. And the central bone of contention was once more the alleged MB religious proselytizing among members of the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>27</sup> Even though MBs may therefore not have been directly involved in this proselytizing activity with their Russian brethren as Peter Braun claimed,<sup>28</sup> they did work through them. MBs were indeed walking a very fine line for Raduga published Russian translations of Evangelical literature, religious tracts in the Russian language. As Kroeker observed, "millions of larger and smaller pieces."

Then suddenly," Kroeker continued, "it was probably in 1911 [actually, 1910] – a mighty storm hit our business [Raduga]. The Vice Governor of Taurida, Koschura-Massalski, arrived with his entourage, they were looking for Stundist propaganda, and in their search they focused primarily on "Raduga." The investigation lasted three days. Because we had assiduously avoided any attack on the [Russian Orthodox] Church, the overzealous official was finally unable to find any incriminating evidence against us. This man was widely known to be an extraordinary reactionary. But that said, in those days the laws were more closely observed than later on, during the war and revolution. *God prohibited, and that in a marvelous manner, that they discovered any trace of our tract society; had they done so, some of us would undoubtedly have spent some involuntary time in Siberia* [my emphasis].<sup>29</sup>

The vice governor's parting words, however, left little doubt that he suspected that there was more going on in Halbstadt than met the eye.

Braun must just have returned from St. Petersburg with the other deputies when this investigation of his business establishment took place, an establishment that employed some fifty workers at the time. In St. Petersburg they had attempted to convince the Ministry of Internal Affairs that they were not a sect, but must continue to be considered a confession. David H. Epp had even presented Pavlov with historical proof positive that Mennonites could not be labeled a sect: that document even being (subsequently?) published by Raduga. The 19-22 March investigation of Raduga and the Rückenauers, however, had the potential to undermine these united Mennonite efforts not only in St. Petersburg. For there were enough Old Church Mennonites around who believed that the vice governor's parting words, by now on everyone's lips, were only too true. Therefore, someone had to explain away, once and for all, the "Baptist" charge; could such a person also explain away the "proselytizing" charge?

Heinrich Braun began the process of explanation nearly immediately. In early April he sent a lengthy letter to Pavlov at the Department of Spir-

itual Affairs which also clearly served as the foundation for his later explanation to the Old Church Mennonites in his "Mennonites or Baptists? An Historical Proof" of 5 May. In the letter he began by listing the participants in the investigation and the concerns of the vice governor. The latter were: 1) the *Vereinshaus*; 2) the Bible courses; 3) the relations between the Mennonite Brethren and Baptists; and 4) proselytizing among the Orthodox. Interrogations by the vice governor had extended into the early hours of the mornings, one of Braun's meetings lasting until 2:45 A.M. The vice governor's goal was to determine, according to Braun, what the differences were between Mennonite Brethren and Baptists. At Braun's first meeting with the vice governor some six other persons had been present, two of whom were Old Church Mennonites. Initial questions had concerned the *Allianz Haus*. But when it had become clear that as a "*Vereinshaus*" it did not belong to any one denomination, the vice governor had shifted his focus to the question whether or not Mennonite Brethren were really Baptists. Margaritov, who had been present, had tried to prove to the vice governor that MBs really were Baptists. But Braun had denied it. To prove this he had pointed, he said, on the one hand, to several important Baptist doctrines he disagreed with, and, on the other, to the cultural and doctrinal ties that bound all Mennonites in Russia together. Elder Unruh (the author of the piece in the *Botschafter*) and preacher Harder had supported him in this. Both he and Unruh had told the vice governor that they considered each other Mennonites even though they did not share communion together.

Having apparently had the MB/Baptist question answered, though perhaps not entirely to his satisfaction, the vice governor had turned to the issue of proselytizing. Were Orthodox believers ever present at the Bible courses, he wanted to know? Once again Braun responded. Bible courses, he asserted, were quite common among Mennonites, and because they were always presented in the German language no Orthodox were ever present.<sup>30</sup>

The questioning about the Bible courses had continued the following afternoon. From the latter the vice governor had turned to the *Vereinshaus*, then to the publishing activity of Raduga. Raduga, he charged, had been accused of printing propaganda. Braun, however, assured him that nothing had ever been printed without censorship approval. Once again the vice governor had returned to the Bible courses, this time asking whether people were being trained in them to proselytize among the Orthodox. As far as he knew, Braun responded, there was no such training. Finally, at 2:45 in the morning he had been dismissed but ordered to return at 1:00 P.M. the next day with some examples of Raduga's publications. In the meantime, Braun had also been asked to put in writing the testimony he had given to the vice

governor. This testimony he now also passed on to Pavlov.

Though the document Braun wrote for the vice governor and later sent to Pavlov was to form the basis of his later *Botschafter* article, it did contain information not given in the latter piece. The first such piece of information dealt with the *Vereinshaus*. It had been established in 1906 one year before he had moved to Halbstadt, Braun declared, so he knew only that it had been privately built. While no denomination owned it (it was registered under the names of Harder and Neufeld, two Old Church Mennonites) it had been built "to unite all believers in the spirit of John 17:20."<sup>31</sup> Therefore all Mennonite groups used it. Even the Forestry Service was to hold its meetings there on 1 April. Other groups like the Mennonite Educational Society and the Molotschna chapter of the Imperial Russian Fruit Growers Association had also met there. Braun did concede that Russian-speaking evangelists occasionally preached from its pulpit, but these were not brought in by the MBs. Such services were simply allowed. And then Braun stated quite frankly: "We believe the Imperial Manifesto of October 17, 1905, gives us the right to do this."<sup>32</sup>

The vice governor and his entourage departed an apprehensive Halbstadt on 22 March, 1910. On 1 April H. J. Braun wrote his lengthy letter to Nikolai Ivanovich Pavlov in the Department of Religious Affairs. Close upon the heels of Braun's letter, which appears to have had little or no impact upon either Pavlov or Stolypin, came the vice governor's report. Dated 9 April, 1910, it left no doubt that Stolypin had ordered the investigation of "the activities of the Mennonite Baptist Brethren in Halbstadt and Astrakhanka."<sup>33</sup> The report began by tracing the history of the Ministry-approved Youth Association and then turned to the origin of the "Rückenau Mennonite Brotherhood of Baptizing by Faith sect."<sup>34</sup> Called Baptists by the "other" Mennonites, and indeed very similar to them, the report continued, these "Rückenausers work energetically among the Russians, proselytizing during the summer harvest months when workers come from all over Central and South Russia."<sup>35</sup> To facilitate such work, Jacob Kroeker and Wilhelm Neufeld had, in 1906, founded the *Allianz Haus* "for the preaching of all faith groups." In reality, however, the building was being used by Russian Baptist preachers like Vgazovsky and Balikhin,<sup>36</sup> and "by Rückenau ones, *especially Heinrich Braun*" [my emphasis].<sup>37</sup> Braun, as founder and director of the Raduga publishing firm, along with board members Jacob Kroeker, Peter Perk, David Issak, Isaak Regehr, and the engineer Ivan Prokhanov, published the *Friedensstimme* and "cheap brochures in Russian and German of religious Baptist content."

The vice governor seemed convinced that the *Allianz Haus*, where Braun and Kroeker, together with other preachers from around the

country and abroad, preached on a regular basis (all of whose sermons were translated into Russian) was being used to win Russians to "Baptism." At the same time, the "Rückenau Brotherhood" had its itinerant preachers "driving around for proselytism and being paid by the Rückenau congregation." He even quoted from an issue of the *Friedensstimme* where it was observed that "the Spirit of God is working among the Russians, though we think rather slowly." The center of all this activity was the *Allianz Haus* whose director was none other than Heinrich J. Braun himself.

Closely related to the Rückenau brotherhood of baptizing Mennonites was the "Evangelical Christian Church" headed by the wealthy landowner and Duma representative, Zakharov, and the "Church of Evangelical Christian Baptists" headed by Balikhin, who, according to the vice governor, also preached at the *Allianz Haus* on occasion. All of these, he asserted, "have a strong orientation to proselytize, especially among the Orthodox,"<sup>38</sup> with converts being baptized by the Rückenau preachers. The congresses, organized by Prokhanov and at times by the Baptist Union, were intended to further such activity, as was the Molokan seminary in Astrakhanka. Thereupon the vice governor launched into a fairly detailed account of the seminary established in 1907 as a theological school without official governmental permission. Among others, it employed a German theologian, Walter Jack<sup>39</sup> who later became the associate of Jacob Kroeker in his missionary ministry *Licht im Osten*. Jack had been sent out to Russia under the auspices of Dr. Lepsius' Oriental Mission. Here as well, it appeared, such MBs as Jacob Kroeker and H. J. Braun were heavily involved. Though the report made evident that the vice governor had learned a great deal from his investigation, he seemed unaware of how close the relationship between the Rückenauers, the Baptists, and the Evangelical Christians, with Prokhanov at their head, really was.

On 5 May, 1910, the very day H. J. Braun's "Mennonites or Baptists? An Historical Proof" appeared in the pages of the *Friedensstimme*, Pavlov submitted a lengthy memorandum to Stolypin on the Raduga investigation and the threat posed to South Russia by the sectarian movement centered in Halbstadt. Whereas Braun's article, as we shall see, was to unleash an extended, at times acrimonious, inter-Mennonite quarrel, Pavlov's memorandum may well have determined the government's policy toward the Russian Mennonites for the foreseeable future. The inter-Mennonite quarrel was carried out in public, in the pages of the *Friedensstimme* and *der Botschafter*, for all to see; the formulation of government policy, however, took place in the relatively secret counsels of the Tsar's ministers and was virtually inaccessible to the Mennonites. Only insofar as it became visible from time to time in legislation

submitted to the Duma, or in the direct actions taken by local and central governmental authorities, could they see the direction it was taking.

Pavlov's memorandum, based on Bondar's letters and the vice governor's and Margaritov's reports on the investigations, demonstrated, in the first instance, that St. Petersburg saw a far greater danger in what appeared to be going on in Halbstadt than did the Governor of Taurida and his staff. Indeed, she saw Halbstadt as the center of a sectarian movement that, along with lesser centers in Astrakhanka and Berdiansk, was posing an ominous threat to all of South Russia. Neither David H. Epp's "historical material" left with Pavlov, nor H. J. Braun's lengthy letter to the same official, had done anything to dissuade the ministry of this impression. Indeed, they may have had a contrary effect.

Both Bondar and Margaritov were critical of the vice governor's investigation, an investigation Braun was to argue that had exonerated him. Margaritov wrote: "... the methods by which the vice governor conducted his investigation testify to his complete ignorance of the importance of the matter."<sup>40</sup> The vice governor, both suggested, had only been looking for signs of the old and familiar connections between MBs and Baptists, for signs of proselytizing activity, and for classes teaching how best to do this. His references to the Molokan seminary had been perfunctory at best, perhaps because he stood in awe of Zakharov's wealth, power, and Duma connections. Nor did he have any grasp of the increasing inter-connectedness of the various evangelical sectarian groups like the MBs, the Baptists, Evangelical Christians and Molokans, and the threat posed by them to the Orthodox Church in the region. Indeed, the utter incompetence of the Taurida governor's oversight of these groups was symbolized by the fact that "the inspector of the German schools in the area has absolutely no knowledge of German; which shows that neither the governor nor any other official understands the importance of regular checks on the schools in the area."<sup>41</sup> From the perspective of both Bondar and Margaritov, therefore, the Taurida vice governor's incompetence, his lax approach to his duties, and his ignorance of the threat posed by the sectarians, were the reasons why he had not uncovered any wrongdoing during his investigation.

At least by 9 October, 1909, Stolypin and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, perhaps because of the explosion of the sectarians' proselytizing activity – MBs included – had begun to see the matter differently. Prior to that time neither the local nor the central governments had done much to stop such activity;<sup>42</sup> by late 1908, however, at least St. Petersburg was beginning to take notice. It is not surprising, therefore, that Pavlov and Kharuzin should have, on 9 October, 1909, requested

the Governor of Taurida to investigate sectarian activity in Halbstadt. By doing so, St. Petersburg was forcing the issue locally, at the same time she was also seeking to formulate and implement a new national religious policy vis-à-vis the sectarians in the wake of the April/October manifestos. The Raduga investigation and the reports that issued from that investigation, especially Pavlov's memorandum, would therefore play an important role in determining the direction her public policy would take.

Pavlov's 5 May, 1910 memorandum to Stolypin began by making the case for a much closer supervision, if not outright restriction, of sectarian (MBs always included) activity in Russia. To that end he argued that although the "Bible courses for preachers and teachers exist perfectly legally and openly," they nevertheless still needed "the attention of the educational authorities." If legally established classes should be supervised, how much more so the illegal ones like those in a private elementary school founded by H. J. Braun where Orthodox children were accepted, or the Sunday school class set up exclusively for Orthodox children. But the classes, legal or illegal, were not the major problem in Halbstadt, Pavlov asserted: the major problem lay in the fact that

Halbstadt now is clearly a major center of Russian sectarianism where not only Mennonite religious life is centered, but also an entire new religious political movement. This factor was completely ignored by the [local] administration as well as by the Orthodox religious ranks. The administration's power in Halbstadt is also weak; [this explains] why it was not only ignorant of the Youth Association, but also of the numerous congresses and conferences of sectarian ministers and preachers from around the country. Nor did it care about the growth of the sectarian movement. The Orthodox Church was no different in its attitude toward Halbstadt, a town that hosts two large prayer houses, several schools and a six-year Central School, for it opened only one small Orthodox elementary school for just fifty children. The educational authorities were equally ignorant of all this. In the latter regard, a typical example of the ruling authority's relationship to the Taurida Mennonites is contained in the person of the local inspector of Melitopol and Berdiansk district schools Dimitrevsky, who personally wrote me that he supervises many German schools in the area and yet has no knowledge of the German language. . . .<sup>43</sup>

Reading between the lines, one can easily see what had happened in Halbstadt. Being an exclusively Mennonite settlement of the kind originally desired by both the Orthodox Church and the Russian State, Halbstadt in particular and the Molotschna colony in general had been left very much to its own devices and allowed to develop as it desired. There had been little apparent governmental supervision, even of the "German schools" after the 1880s and the attempt at Russification.



With the religious awakening of the 1850s and 1860s, the Molotschna colony had gradually become the Russian MB center, with the Rückenau MB Church, located in the village of Rückenau, becoming "the nerve center in the development of the MB movement."<sup>44</sup> In 1908 the Raduga Publishing firm was established in Halbstadt, whose board of directors, aside from Prokhanov, consisted exclusively of MBs. Under the direction of H. J. Braun, who also directed and preached in the *Allianz Haus*, MB control in Halbstadt had become significant indeed. And virtually all of this activity was unsupervised by the political, church, and educational authorities. Therefore, when the 1905 manifestos had proclaimed a complete religious freedom, these MBs had not only begun to proselytize more openly among the Orthodox, they had also established close relations with the Molokans in Astrakhanka, with Prokhanov and the Evangelical Christians, and continued their close relationships with the Baptists. Meanwhile, the Governor of Taurida, perhaps in the habit of assuming that Mennonites were law abiding subjects who did not need close supervision, continued to treat them with benign neglect. Under such a regime the Rückenauers had established intimate relationships with the other sectarians and created institutions like Raduga and the *Allianz Haus* to assist in the work of proselytizing. They had even sent out itinerant evangelists in 1906 and participated in the "sectarian" congresses and conferences in order to facilitate cooperation between the various groups who sought to bring about a "reformation" in Russia. Little wonder that Stolypin himself, in his letter to the Taurida governor of 3 March, 1910 ordering an investigation of the Rückenauers and Raduga, had referred to what had developed in Halbstadt as "one of the most vital expressions of the sectarian movement in the country" and one of the "most significant emerging factors in the life of Russia."<sup>45</sup> Halbstadt could no longer be ignored.

Pavlov's advice that sectarians had, in the future, to be monitored much more closely because of the danger they posed to the State, can therefore only have confirmed Stolypin's beliefs. To do this, Pavlov recommended, local governments should study the movement and keep the central government informed of all sectarian activities. It was such information, not the presentations or submissions of sectarians that would assist in the formulation of its religious policy. Seeking to intimidate sectarians through occasional harassment, as the vice governor seemed to be doing, was not helpful. A much more systematic and strictly legal approach had to be adopted, one that would no longer allow sectarians to conduct any illegal activity whatsoever. This meant that even if their schools had been set up with the consent of the Department of National Education, for example, all sectarian schools were still illegal if they had been established without the consent, and

were not currently under the oversight, of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. And as for their legally established schools, they too should be closely supervised. Pavlov therefore recommended the following to Stolypin:

[First], contact the Taurida governor and explain to him the conclusions the ministry has arrived at, the importance of the sectarian issue in light of the State's concerns, and the government's attitude toward the sectarian's legal and illegal activities. [Second], write the Minister of National Education, informing him about everything that has transpired in Taurida gubernia, and request that he act immediately to restore lawful order in the region and assist the local educational authorities with material help and staff to intensify the work of cultural education [Russification] in the area. [Third], ask the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church to assist in the spiritual, cultural and educational endeavors of the local church.<sup>46</sup>

Stolypin wrote the Governor of Taurida as Pavlov had requested on 20 May, 1910. Echoing the latter's assessment and his own earlier statements, he again called the Taurida gubernia "one of the major centers of sectarianism." Only now he gave a more specific reason for believing that this was so, arguing that it lay in the "fact that the traditionally sectarian Don region" had been relocated next to "the Mennonite colonies, which have reached a very high level of cultural and economic sophistication." He reiterated Pavlov's contention that the sectarians had to be monitored and watched closely by the local authorities who knew local conditions best. But the latter had always to act in consultation and cooperation with St. Petersburg in order to assist in the formulation of her public policy. To be helpful in this regard, Stolypin contended, local authorities had to become better informed about the sectarian movement and communicate their observations on a regular basis to the central government.

As it had Pavlov, what appeared to perturb Stolypin more than anything else in the whole affair was the virtual absence of any State administrative and Orthodox Church presence in a region where the sectarians, especially the Mennonites, had become highly sophisticated culturally and economically. That alone made them attractive to the surrounding Russian (Ukrainian) population. He observed:

[The cultural, educational, and religious institutions in Halbstadt] are controlled by the sectarians, most of them of German nationality; but the only keeper and preserver of the Russian Orthodox culture is a church school for fifty children. It is therefore clear that the Russian population, fully economically dependent upon a foreign sectarian milieu, is slowly adopting the new ways of sectarianism and spreading seeds hostile to Russia.<sup>47</sup>

Stolypin seemed to concede that the Molotschna Mennonites had successfully resisted Russification. Indeed, he seemed to be saying that the actual reverse of what the government had intended was taking place: instead of the colonists becoming russified, Russians were being turned into cultural Germans and religious Protestants because of the Mennonites' cultural, religious and economic dominance in the region. Therefore, if the State and Orthodox Church did not increase their presence in the area and take control of matters, Stolypin asserted, "then we can openly admit to a full capitulation of the Russian Orthodox idea before the forces of the foreign sectarians." Nevertheless, he was "not [in favor of] the repression of all sectarian culture and spiritual life, but the study and mentoring of the sectarians in order to direct them toward the common goal of the State by means of the law." On the positive side, a "reverse cultural pressure" had to be exerted upon the Mennonites and "the danger of the one or the other sect to the State" carefully evaluated. Clearly, Stolypin regarded the Mennonites as the critical factor in the spread of sectarianism in the region, but it was not only their religious proselytizing that concerned him. It was Stolypin's contention that their proselytizing was made all the more effective by the Mennonites' cultural and economic superiority.

Historically, Stolypin continued, the Taurida gubernia had been influenced by two major religious movements: the local Mennonites, and the Molokans who had moved into the Molotschna from the Don region. "Together," he argued, "these two movements, joined by the Baptists, have merged into one single, large sectarian force – or rational sectarianism – embracing the entire Russian South." The Mennonites, Stolypin insisted, had to be "monitored carefully so that their cultural tribalism will not contaminate those Russians who associate with them." Since the Mennonite influence was so significant, the government's power and presence had to be increased not only in Halbstadt, the main center of sectarian activity, but also in Astrakhanka and Berdiansk, the other two, perhaps lesser centers. Only then could all illegal activity be ended; all illegal schools closed, including the Molokan seminary, and a much more stringent oversight of all sectarian activity instituted. At the moment, however, the absence of such oversight and control was eroding respect for the power of the State and could no longer be tolerated.<sup>48</sup>

The Governor of Taurida finally got around to answering Stolypin's letter on 7 August, 1910. He sought to excuse his lack of attention to the sectarian problem by pleading the press of other duties, like the upcoming trip of the Tsar to the Crimea and the threat to his safety posed by a revolutionary group. Even so, he contended, he had not ignored the Astrakhanka congress, having asked the Berdiansk chief of

police personally to investigate it. But the latter had left the task to an incompetent underling. And as soon as he had discovered the illegal nature of the Molokan seminary he had, on 25 March, 1910, closed it down. As to the vice governor's Halbstadt investigation, he said, everything had been done "in an appropriate manner." The vice governor had brought all the Mennonite and "Baptist preachers" together and explained their rights to them; they had not been harassed in any way whatsoever. They had been told that the authorities simply wanted to "get acquainted with them and the Bible courses since they needed to be aware of them." Then the governor made an interesting observation about the differing reactions of the "purely Mennonite" and "Baptist" [MB] preachers to the investigation. The former, he said, "were very friendly with us, they had nothing against writing a full report of what they knew. [Indeed, they] exposed everything that was going on and explained the nature of the courses." The "Rückenau preachers," however, had reacted differently. They were, he said, "very ambivalent about talking." And when confronted with "previous reports [that] exposed their proselytizing activity among the Orthodox [and] their illegal Sunday schools," they had begun to show their "dissatisfaction with the inquiry." Indeed, as this side of their activity was exposed more and more, they "had become bitter."<sup>49</sup> From the governor's point of view MBs clearly had more "to hide" with respect to proselytizing among the Orthodox than did Old Church Mennonites.

The March 1910 investigation of Raduga and the Rückenau preachers did not end Stolypin's enquiry into what he considered illegal sectarian activity in the Molotschna. In the Taurida governor's report of 1 July, 1910, Stolypin had become aware of the fact that Mennonite schools, such as the Halbstadt School of Commerce, had been approved and chartered by the Ministry of Trade and Industry without so much as a consultation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs.<sup>50</sup> On 8 July, 1910 the Odessa Regional School District informed him that a criminal investigation of the Astrakhanka Molokan seminary was underway.<sup>51</sup> But it was not until 8 October, 1910 that Stolypin wrote to I. Timashev, Minister of Trade and Commerce, to complain about the fact that the minister's action in establishing sectarian schools of commerce without reference to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, "which ought to supervise all matters regarding the non-Orthodox, stripped away [the ministry's] powers in opening these schools."<sup>52</sup> From this specific issue Stolypin then moved to the general principles that had to be followed in such matters:

All matters relating to national education, he wrote, represent issues of interest to the State and demand planning and step by step procedures to resolve them. Without repressing individual initiative or religious peculiarities,

the State nevertheless has the first say in matters of education. There can therefore be no talk even of establishing schools without following all the guidelines prescribed by the State. *In recent years, however, the non Orthodox and non Russian elements have increasingly tended to abuse the generous provisions of the State, using the latter against the State's own interests. Beginning with the publication of the 17 April Manifesto, this tendency has grown into a systematic abuse of the religious freedom law, and under the pretext of establishing religious schools elementary and even higher schools are being established.* Therefore the opening of all types of schools in the Empire must be subject to the same guidelines and regulations in order to avoid extending privileges to one or another religious group based on the level of their incessant petitioning and search for loopholes. These new regulations must be written in such a way that no harm will be done to the Orthodox and Russian populations who may also wish to benefit from these schools. I have referred this matter to the Minister of National Education and we have agreed that an inter-ministerial meeting ought to be held where the Council of Ministers would pass a resolution in regard to this matter. The minister told me that such a meeting can be organized without delay. Please write me immediately indicating your opinion regarding this proposal and how soon you can be present at such an inter-ministerial meeting.<sup>53</sup>

The above document makes quite apparent that whatever Mennonites may have thought about the 19-22 March, 1910 investigation of Raduga, it had consequences they may never have connected with the investigation; consequences that led to much more stringent oversight of their affairs by the central government. It must also have led to an end to the *laissez faire* attitude taken by the Taurida governor's office toward the Mennonites, and affected legislation on all non-Orthodox matters after 1910. For even though the government's reaction may have set in earlier, the Raduga investigation provided the evidence needed to justify the "new regulations" that dealt with matters affecting the Mennonites in Russia after 1910. At the same time, even though the St. Petersburg authorities (in the above as well as other documents) distinguished between "pure Mennonites" and the "Rückenaus Baptists," the government's legislation made no such distinctions between the two groups and therefore affected all equally. Old Church Mennonites suspected this and therefore all the more resented the MB's attempt to exploit the April/October Manifestos to the fullest extent possible. Stolypin, however – and perhaps Old Church Mennonites with him – saw the MB's attempt to exploit the 1905 manifestos as a "systematic abuse of the religious freedom law."

If Pavlov's 5 May, 1910 memorandum indicated the government's internal deliberations regarding South Russian sectarianism, it also marked the day on which H. J. Braun's "Mennonites or Baptists?" appeared in the pages of the *Friedensstimme*<sup>54</sup> where it unleashed a war of words among the two Mennonite groups. On 25 and 28 May it was

reprinted, by request of the author, in the pages of *Der Botschafter*.<sup>55</sup> Braun apparently desired maximum coverage among the Old Church Mennonites for his "proof" because he wished to dispel an old accusation given new life by this recent investigation at a most precarious moment for all Russian Mennonites. Braun's opening lines make the point:

Repeatedly this question," Braun asserted, "has emerged during the fifty years of the existence of the Mennonite Brethren Church here in Russia. Every time it was answered correctly by the government and by the church; the members of the Mennonite Brethren Church are Mennonites. In spite of this, there seems to have remained a certain obscurity in some circles or possibly only among individual persons. I once [?] was subjected to official investigation here in Halbstadt by the honorable vice governor and by our school board which, surprisingly, was present at the occasion. The official, I might add, seemed to regard this matter as very important. He kept repeating, "Your own people, the Mennonites, *even the teachers*, call the members of the Mennonite Brethren Church 'Baptists.'" Whether it is due to *harmless ignorance or ignoble insult* I will not judge, but one must still ask with astonishment, "How is that possible?"<sup>56</sup>

It was a nice touch on Braun's part to slip in the reference to the so-recent investigation of his establishment in Halbstadt with "I was *once* subjected to official investigation . . . ." But it probably fooled no one. Little wonder, as we shall see, David H. Epp was unhappy with Braun's piece.

One of the reasons MBs had been accused of being Baptists was the similarity of the two modes of baptism; the implication being that MBs had adopted their immersion baptism from the Baptists. Braun, however, sought to prove that Mennonites had not "taken immersion from the Baptists, but vice versa." In other words, immersion baptism had been practiced by some Mennonite groups before Baptists used it. He went even further, arguing that Richard Blount of England, in 1640, had been baptized in the Netherlands by the Dompelaar minister, Jan Batte. Blount had then, upon his return in 1641, introduced immersion baptism to England.<sup>57</sup> Now all this might be true, but did it prove that MBs had adopted the practice from earlier Mennonites and not from the German Baptists? Not at all.<sup>58</sup>

In a paper dealing with the subject of baptism delivered by his own brother Peter in Halbstadt only about three or four years later, the latter made the following statement:

If now, having looked at the historical development [of baptism], we turn our attention to the baptismal practices of the Mennonite Brethren, we discover that the latter have adopted – in this regard – a position we will hardly find replicated

in any other Christian fellowship. The MB Church is not guided by any religious or dogmatic considerations – no, she ties the validity of baptism solely and alone to – *the external form!* It is for this reason that she does not recognize baptism by sprinkling of the other Mennonite churches [my emphasis] . . .

Therefore, from an MB point of view, at least according to H. J.'s brother Peter, there would have been a fundamental difference between the MB position and that of earlier Anabaptist/Mennonite groups that practiced immersion baptism. For the earlier groups the form of baptism had not been a divisive issue precisely because Anabaptists stressed *believers' baptism*, that is, baptism upon a confession of faith. In that context, the *form of baptism* was not of critical importance. In the MB context, however, it was. Furthermore, Peter Braun was in error when he argued that MBs were alone in laying such stress on the form of baptism. The very same stress can be seen in the German Baptists who initially helped the MBs in the early stages of their development, as well as in the Hamburg Baptist seminary where most of the MB theology students got their education. This is made amply evident in August Rauschenbusch's little history on the origin of infant baptism.<sup>59</sup> There Rauschenbusch wrote:

But they [the Mennonites] did not recognize the *necessity of baptism by immersion. The honor to have first recognized, and then implemented this, belongs to others, indeed to better people* about whom we now wish to report more fully [my emphasis].<sup>60</sup>

Thereupon Rauschenbusch proceeded to speak of Richard Blount and the introduction of immersion baptism by the English Baptists. Did not this similarity between MBs and Baptists demonstrate the MB dependence upon the Baptists for their views on immersion baptism? And should H. J. Braun not have known this, having studied under Rauschenbusch's son-in-law, J. G. Fetzer, at the Hamburg Baptist seminary; indeed, was he not still at the seminary when August Rauschenbusch published his book on baptism?

Braun's argument therefore missed the point about immersion baptism that so irritated his Old Church brothers. Had MBs emphasized the Anabaptist fashion of *baptism upon confession of faith* (and they granted that there were an ever increasing number of true "believers," as they understood the term, in the old church), they would not have demanded a blanket rebaptism of all persons from that church who wished to join them. They would not have, in the first sixty-or-so years of their existence, excluded these believers from sharing their communion table.<sup>61</sup> But the *form of baptism* divided the MBs from Old Church Mennonites and certainly brought them closer to the German Baptists who, in the case of Rauschenbusch at least, were Augustinian,

not Anabaptist, in their theology and quite cavalierly dismissed nonresistance and the rejection of the oath.

The other aspect that brought MBs together with Baptists and separated them from Old Church Mennonites, Braun continued, was their requirement for a thorough conversion before baptism. Here, certainly, there were differences between MBs and Old Church Mennonites on a number of levels. First of all, although the latter also spoke of conversion, they saw it as a *process* rather than a sudden transformation. This can be seen in Epp's *Erläuterungen*<sup>62</sup> as well as in some of the Old Church conference resolutions.<sup>63</sup> This meant, of course, that persons entered the Mennonite Church on occasion who were not "born again" in the MB sense. And the Old Church description of the church as a "mixed body" confirmed this. It is at this point that we must point to one of the ironies of Russian Mennonite history.

With Menno Simons very prominently among them, Anabaptists had categorically rejected the general sixteenth-century Christian (Catholic and Magisterial Protestant) view of the church as consisting of both "wheat" and "tares." This latter view, based on an erroneous interpretation of Matthew 13:24-29, and 36-43 (the Parable of the Tares), goes back to the third century Pope Callistus and the late fourth century Augustine of Hippo.<sup>64</sup> It held that the "field" in the parable represented the church. This flew in the face of Christ's own later explanation of the parable to his disciples where he told them that the "field" represented the world. Augustine's interpretation demanded that the wheat and the tares had therefore to co-exist in the field (church) until the Last Judgment. Thus the church was said to contain both the true and the merely nominal Christians, or even non-Christians. It was an interpretation driven by the universalization of the church and the need to justify the growth of territorial churches. The Anabaptists countered this universalistic argument with the argument for the purity of the church: the exclusion of the tares from the church through the baptism of true believers and the expulsion of unrepentant sinners. However, beginning in the early 1860s, Mennonite bishops under the leadership of Gnadenfeld's Lenzmann began to use the Augustinian argument against the MBs;<sup>65</sup> the adoption of this interpretation by Old Church bishops was not an aberration.

In 1892, Heinrich Dirks, former missionary in Sumatra, now bishop of Gnadenfeld, and educated under Friedrich Fabri at the Barmen Missions School, published his previously delivered lectures on the Kingdom of God.<sup>66</sup> Central to his explanation of the Kingdom of God was the Parable of the Tares. He began his interpretation of that parable with a clear recognition that Christ had himself declared the "field" to represent the world. But, like Augustine when confronted with this fact



at the 411 Council of Carthage by the Donatists,<sup>67</sup> Dirks too began to rationalize it out of existence. He did so by asserting that Christ had called the field "his acre," but only a part of that acre had as yet been sown by Christ with pure wheat. Now, precisely in those parts of the acre sown by Christ had come the devil to sow his tares, weeds that had the outward appearance of wheat. These were the children of perdition mentioned by Christ; they were therefore to be found among the children of the kingdom. And then he observed:

Since the Christian Church is that part of the acre where Christ has already sown the good seed and where the children of the kingdom, who have been born from the seed of the Word of the Kingdom, are found – the Christian Church also contains within her ranks the children of perdition, whom the devil sows as evil tares between the rows of wheat. – The Christian Church in general and every congregation individually has a *mixed nature*. On the congregational acre there grow, right next to the wheat, the tares, weeds, which have the outward appearance of wheat but inwardly have the nature of weeds. True Christians and merely nominal Christians are mixed together and stand next to one another in the churches; and even the best of congregations will have to admit this.<sup>68</sup>

Dirks's interpretation was close to that of a Lenzmann, though perhaps more sophisticated. The latter had been opposed nearly immediately by a "Mennonite brother" Jacob Martens, not an MB, who had challenged this interpretation in the pages of the *Mennonitische Blätter*. There Martens had remarked:

Those souls who truly seek the truth among us, together with many others, will not allow the system which the bishops have expressed in their letter to the [Guardian] Committee to be imposed upon us, as though it were in accordance with God's order that believers and unbelievers be indiscriminately admitted to communion. The theory propounded is, for us, most convenient, even has the air of respectability, but the members of our congregations know as well as we do that the field [mentioned in the parable], where both the wheat and the tares grew up together, is not the Lord's Church – which is to expel the wicked – but is the world . . . .<sup>69</sup>

This internal opposition aside, however, the interpretation of Lenzmann and Dirks prevailed in the Old Church, with its general conference of 1888 declaring, in resolution #16:

The great majority [once again, at least some internal dissent] of the delegates are of the opinion that the acre, upon which – according to the original text – wheat and tares coexist, represents the Christian Church; – and under the uprooting of the tares, which the servants wished to do immediately but were hindered from doing by the Lord, is to be understood the ban. Accordingly, those members of the church who, like tares are similar to the wheat, may coex-

ist with the latter; nor are those to be denied baptism or access to communion (who may still be tares), for they might already be true wheat.

Only those who are not tares but who have committed grave sins, as those described in 1 Cor. 5: 11, and 2 Thess. 3, and manifest themselves as weeds, may not – until they reform themselves – be admitted to baptism and communion. – And if these have already become church members through baptism they must be separated [from the church].<sup>70</sup>

Where did this anti-Anabaptist interpretation come from? We have seen that in its larger church historical context it came from Pope Callistus in the third century, but especially from Augustine in the late fourth, early fifth centuries. But how did it come into the Russian Mennonite church vocabulary? With Lenzmann, bishop of Gnadenfeld, as first exponent, it probably came through the “Lutheran Mennonites” in Gnadenfeld. But Dirks’ interpretation came directly from Friedrich Fabri and the Pietistic Lutheran Barmen Missions School. He made this explicitly clear in his 1908 *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch* (Mennonite Yearbook) where he referred to notes on Matthew 13 dictated to him as a student directly by Fabri himself. According to those notes, Fabri had described the church as

... neither better nor worse than it is described in Christ’s parable. Now if the church has the structure and characteristics that Christ not only described, but also prophesied, in his parables; and if Christ recognizes the kingdom of God in a church such as the one we see coming into existence in the world – as one may deduce from: “The kingdom of God is like,” with which the parables begin – then a church of such a structure and such characteristics, that is in its mixed nature, is not entirely to be rejected . . .

And Dirks concluded:

The truths I have emphasized in this essay [i.e., Fabri’s interpretation of Matthew 13] I presented already in the concluding sections of my 1892 book: *The Kingdom of God in the Light of the Parables*. I thought, in order to promote biblical sobriety, I was obligated to throw these truths, by way of the *Mennonite Yearbook*, into the midst of my beloved Mennonite people. The teaching of the entire truth must also have its propagators amongst our people.<sup>71</sup>

What could be clearer: a Mennonite bishop defending the church of wheat and tares with the argument, indeed misinterpretation, of the enemies of the sixteenth-century Anabaptists!

Here, now, was the Russian Mennonite tragedy. On the one hand, there were the MBs defending immersion baptism with a “Baptist,” not an Anabaptist argument. On the other hand, the Old Church Mennonites defended the church of wheat and tares with an Augustinian/Lutheran argument opposed to that of the Anabaptists. To a degree,

Mennonite ignorance of their history, especially that of their origins had permitted such things to transpire and to divide them more radically than might otherwise have been the case. The rift ran deeper than either H. J. Braun or David H. Epp was aware.

It should therefore not surprise us to find that David H. Epp felt compelled to respond to Braun's "historical proof." Taking the latter's question: "How is this possible?" as his title (how was it possible that Old Church Mennonites could still accuse MBs of being Baptists) Epp began with a disclaimer: he, for one, did not believe MBs to be Baptists. What he did object to was that MBs referred to Old Church Mennonites as *kirchliche* (churchly) and arrogated to themselves the term "brethren" when Mennonites had traditionally been known as a "brotherhood." In doing so, MBs intended to imply, Epp suggested, that the Old Church was "unclean and impure, while the Mennonite Brethren Church is considered as the only bearer of genuine Christian life." Epp recognized the Old Church's shortcomings; nevertheless, he wished the name, and the recognition that went with it, to be left to her. What Epp omitted to say, however, was that this church that wished to retain the name and honor of being a "brotherhood" defined itself in terms of the coexistence of wheat and tares in her midst! Obviously, Epp faced a dilemma: how could this church of wheat and tares – as Lenzmann, Dirks, and the church's general conference had all designated it – be a "brotherhood?" He himself conceded that whereas "some" in the church were indeed "born again," not all were.

Having given vent to his frustration, Epp turned to how it was possible that Old Church Mennonites could believe MBs to be Baptists. He began by asserting that MBs had not only formed a new congregation in 1860; they had broken from the Mennonite family. He clearly had no intention of accepting the argument that they had simply been seeking, like the sixteenth-century reformers, to return to pristine biblical teachings; in the MB case to the teachings of Menno. What he did point to were the divisive characteristics that had emerged, characteristics exemplified by the fact that MBs withheld the Lord's Supper from Old Church Mennonites while sharing it with Baptists. On the one hand, therefore, there was rupture and refusal to sit at the same communion table; on the other, intimate fellowship with Baptists. Should one then not consider them more Baptist than Mennonite? Certainly, the vice governor of Taurida had thought so.

But even more disruptive was the fact that the MB Church "considers immersion the only biblically correct mode of baptism." We noted earlier how this assertion had troubled Epp's own soul. The consequence of this belief was that anyone who wished to join the MB Church from the Old Church had to be rebaptized. The Old Church did

not demand this of those who joined it from the MB Church, however. In this regard, Epp had a legitimate complaint, one that he could have strengthened had he known that this emphasis on the exclusivity of immersion baptism came from the German Baptists. On the other hand, however, he said nothing of the Anabaptist principle of baptism upon confession of faith, a principle nearly defined away and circumvented by his church's blanket baptism of those who had been catechized. Old Church Mennonites sensed this problem, and Epp knew this for he had attended the meetings where his church's general conference had addressed the issue of "how much faith" was necessary for baptism.<sup>72</sup> And by the description given the church in her general conference resolutions, she had conceded the presence of tares. Like Braun, who for his part emphasized those arguments that favored his position, Epp enumerated only those that gave credence to his.<sup>73</sup>

What really offended Epp, however, was Braun's statement concerning the early MBs' "audacity to call the *kirchliche* Mennonites a spiritually dead church." Rather than laud it, as Braun had done, Epp condemned this "audacity" on the part of the upstart movement where "seeking for God and wild fanaticism *are still* [my emphasis] characteristically intermingled. In its stalk and roots runs much diseased Christianity that is not yet cleared away." Such a church, he asserted, could not reach "an unprejudiced and fair judgment." Only because "the Mennonite Church had tolerated the Mennonite Brethren Church" had the latter been enabled to retain its Mennonite privileges. Here, however, Epp surely exaggerated Old Church "forbearance"; at the same time he ignored its persecution of the MB "sect." Epp, like Braun, was overly defensive. Both sides could still not deal dispassionately with 1860.

The last problem Epp focused upon, that of proselytizing, was to become the most divisive issue separating the two groups in the next few years. As we have seen, proselytizing also lay at the heart of Stolypin's investigation of Raduga. In Epp's case, however, it was not the proselytizing among the Russian Orthodox that troubled him; it was MB proselytizing in the ranks of the Old Church. Such proselytizing, he asserted, was not allowed by St. Paul; nor had it ever happened in the Mennonite Church before. Toward the end, Epp returned once more to the MB/Baptist connection, saying that all old people in Choritzka knew that Oncken had organized the MB Church and set Bishop Unger in office. Nevertheless, Epp did not wish to make MBs Baptists; he wished merely to point out the way in which closer relationships could be achieved between the two groups. He conceded that it was "up to our side to overcome a mountain of prejudices"; the other side, however, would have to "offer more frankness, trust and tolerance." It was

not until both sides had experienced the trauma of war, civil war, and revolution, however, that a measure of reconciliation was achieved. In the meantime, there was work to be done that demanded mutual cooperation.<sup>74</sup>

In a later, testy exchange with Abraham Kroeker, editor of the *Friedensstimme*, Epp conceded that his suspicions had been aroused by the Halbstadt investigation. It had surprised him, he said, that the *Friedensstimme* had remained silent about it, even to the extent of avoiding any comment on the article entitled "Bange Tage in Halbstadt" (Days of Apprehension in Halbstadt) carried by *Der Botschafter*. H. J. Braun's "Baptists or Mennonites" had only increased his suspicions, even provoked him because of its tendentiousness. He had been left with no alternative but to reply, for he assumed that where there was smoke there also had to be fire. Shortly thereafter he had received a telegram, which he had printed in *Der Botschafter*, announcing the forthcoming Baptist and Evangelical Christian Congress for 1- 9 September in St. Petersburg.<sup>75</sup> The telegram had proclaimed the purpose of the congress to be the creation of a union of Russian Baptists, Evangelical Christians, and "Mennonites." Since Epp knew "Mennonites" would not participate in such an event, he began to wonder if MBs were masquerading under an assumed identity.

Epp's discussion of the telegram's import finally provoked Kroeker to respond in the *Friedensstimme*. It was a "Baptist" congress, he informed Epp; others who chose to attend did so merely as individuals and guests, certainly not as equal partners in a projected union. Epp immediately pounced upon Kroeker's delayed response.<sup>76</sup> He challenged the *Friedensstimme's* right to speak for "Mennonites" and wished to know if MBs had perhaps registered as "Mennonites" at the congress to cover their tracks. He implied that MBs had not been forthright in their representation to the Taurida vice governor concerning the purpose of the *Vereinshaus*, calling it in reality a second MB church. Given all of this at a time when MBs were beginning to work more closely with Old Church Mennonites, Epp believed that Russian Mennonites were entitled to know whether they were about to enter into a union with the Russian Baptists and Evangelical Christians. Since Prokhanov was to moderate the St. Petersburg congress, Epp had immediately written him for clarification.

Prokhanov had replied, telling Epp that the reporter, on whose article the telegram had been based, had confused MBs with Old Church Mennonites. The report should have read that Russian Baptists were seeking union with MBs, not the other way around. But Epp had also learned from Prokhanov that the latter had very close ties to H. J. Braun and Raduga, for he was the director of the Raduga branch in St. Peters-

burg which published the Association's Russian literature. Epp's suspicions had increased, for as he wrote:

Heinrich Braun is, if I am not mistaken, director and general manager of the firm; and, as the facts make evident, as preacher of the Rückenau MB Church the perennial representative of the [Russian] MB Church to outside agencies. Did it not then seem natural that Prokhanov could have discussed his hopes and plans with Br. Braun? You [Kroeker] yourself now confirm this assumption in your answer! And Rev. Braun said nothing about the matter, and you, too, remained silent. All the while Prokhanov's plans were exposed to the world.<sup>77</sup>

On 14 September, 1910 Epp published excerpts from a report of a *Committee of the All-Russian Union of Evangelical Christians* addressed to the forthcoming St. Petersburg congress. It spoke of forming a committee consisting of two representatives each from the Evangelical Christians, Baptists, MBs, and German and Latvian Baptists. While each group was to remain autonomous, they were to be united in their dealings with the government and in their support of a Bible institute. They had already cooperated in proclaiming a national day of prayer and in the creation of a common press organization. Their ultimate goal, the report continued, was "transforming the entire religious life of the Russian people."<sup>78</sup> Could there be any doubt that such a goal would have to entail proselytizing among the Russian Orthodox? Was this not against the law? And had Mennonites not promised, upon their entry into the country, not to do so? Old Church Mennonites had never done this. Were MBs doing it?

This time Kroeker answered in the pages of *Der Botschafter*, about the time the first United Mennonite General Conference was to take place in Schönsee. Assuming a greater ignorance of MB/Baptist/Evangelical Christian affairs than was in fact the case on Epp's part, Kroeker challenged the latter's right to tell MBs they could not simply call themselves "Mennonites," that the *Friedensstimme* should not presume to speak on other than MB matters, that MBs did not need Epp's or any of the other Old Church Mennonites' permission to attend the St. Petersburg Baptist Congress. He rejected what he considered Epp's insinuations about MB integrity in representing themselves at the congress or in what they had done with the *Vereinshaus* in Halbstadt. He informed him that his assumptions about the proposed union were patently incorrect: union was not a foregone conclusion. Indeed, Baptists had not yet responded to the proposal of the Evangelical Christians, and the Baptists' proposal to the Rückenau Church had been rejected on principle by the MBs. In conclusion, he threw in Epp's face the statement made in the 7 February, 1908 document submitted to the government about Christ's Great Commission and the proclamation of the Gospel.

That document had been written primarily by Old Church Mennonites. Did Kroeker imply that Epp was not interested in such a proclamation?<sup>79</sup>

Epp's response came in three parts, none of them in a "brotherly" tone.<sup>80</sup> Since Kroeker had become personal, Epp began, so would he. After all, Kroeker had sought to undermine his credibility with the Old Church and its people. He complained that Kroeker's use of the term *kirchliche* was opposed to historical truth, and he accused him of shirking his obligation to divulge all of the above facts earlier. Even at this late date Kroeker could have explained matters more calmly and without becoming polemical. He, Epp, had every right to worry that MBs were associating themselves too closely with the Baptists. Throughout the piece Epp reluctantly and only on occasion admitted to error on his part. Instead, he attempted, as he put it, to "turn the lance back upon Kroeker." The latter had asserted that H. J. Braun had explained the *Vereinshaus* fully and satisfactorily to the vice governor. If that were so, Epp countered, why had the latter then said what he had upon his departure? Nor did it matter, Epp continued, if the union between Baptists and Evangelical Christians had gone nowhere; it was the attitude of the MBs that bothered him. Even his false assumptions were placed at Kroeker's doorstep because the latter had said nothing on the above matters until now. And, as we have seen, he knew all about Prokhanov.<sup>81</sup> Yet in spite of everything, Epp made no assertions; he only raised insinuating questions.

Kroeker had openly accused Epp of bias against the MBs; Epp addressed this charge in his concluding section. He did not deny the accusation, rather, he responded by finding bias in virtually everything Kroeker and H. J. Braun had done in these matters. He went even further, calling Kroeker's response both arrogant and insulting. His parting shot was typical.

... If *Der Botschafter*, he wrote, "does not speak as the official organ of the Mennonite Church of Russia, she nevertheless defends her according to knowledge and conscience, just as the *Friedensstimme* defends the interests of the MB Church – just the *Friedensstimme*, in tone and content, pursues a much more blatant partisan policy made evident by the fact that she attacks the Old Church Mennonites in "Baptists or Mennonites?" but refuses to print the considered response of the American Elder Isaac Peters.<sup>82</sup>





## The Godless Promise not to make Propaganda for the Mennonite Faith

*It pains me to have to admit that I am a descendant of those Mennonites who once made the godless promise that they would not make any propaganda for the Mennonite faith.*

— J. H. Janzen, Br. Hermann Fast's Konjunktiv

**T**his entire exchange, occasioned by the Raduga investigation of 19-22 March, 1910 and beginning with Braun's "Baptists or Mennonites?" demonstrated how near to the surface old wounds and animosities lay in the Russian Mennonite community some sixty years after the MB schism. Even the best among the Old Church Mennonites – and Epp certainly was one of them – still felt the sting of MB accusations and remained defensive toward them and suspicious of them. What business of Epp's was it if MBs chose to work with Russian Baptists and other Evangelical Christians to spread the Gospel in the country? Was it not arrogance on his part to question their integrity or try to tell them what to do; in fact, to lecture them? They were not beholden to him, most certainly not when it came to trying to fulfill the Great Commission. J. H. Janzen, one of Epp's fellow Old Church Mennonites, later charged that it had been the worst thing Mennonites could have done to have promised the government upon their entry into the country that they would not proselytize. Peter Braun, the MB, had to answer him that, to the best of his knowledge, Mennonites had never made such a promise nor signed any agreement to that effect. It was true, Braun told his friend, that proselytizing among the members of the Orthodox Church was forbidden by Russian law; but the argument that Mennonites had signed an agreement not to do so only arose at the time when the above events had taken place. The clear implication of Braun's response was to suggest that such an assertion had been made by Old Church Mennonites at this time to justify their failure to involve themselves, something Epp conceded, in such activity in Russia.

There were problems on the other side as well, however. Both H. J. Braun and Kroeker were defensive about the investigation and MB involvement with *Stundists*, Russian Baptists and Evangelical Chris-

tians. Braun's rather oblique reference to the Halbstadt investigation and the *Friedensstimme's* utter silence on the matter demonstrates as much. Furthermore, Kroeker's 1926 essay on Raduga indicates that they at least felt they had succeeded in hiding their Russian tract activity from the Taurida vice governor: Kroeker arguing in that piece that God had prevented their being discovered. His attack on Epp did manifest a kind of spiritual arrogance as well as a strong sense of irritation that Old Church Mennonites should still be trying to tell MBs what to do. And it was true, of course, that while they were beginning to work more closely on "Mennonite" matters with the Old Church, they were also continuing to work very closely with *Stundists*, the Russian Baptists and Evangelical Christians. Whereas the latter was not a concern for MBs, it was for the Old Church Mennonites even though there were those in her midst who were also involved in various aspects of MB missionary work. What speaks well of both sides, however, is the fact that in spite of such eruptions from time to time there were those on both sides who refused to allow events like this to deter them from their greater goals. Yet those "greater goals" were to be significantly affected by the impact the investigation was to have upon the St. Petersburg authorities.

Reverberations of these events could be felt as far away as Germany where H. van der Smissen, editor of the *Mennonitische Blätter*, felt compelled to address Braun's "Baptists or Mennonites?" Van der Smissen may well have remembered Braun from his Hamburg/Horn Baptist Seminary days; he may even have been miffed that Russian MB students attended local Baptist churches rather than his Mennonite church. Whatever the case, in an 8 August, 1910 article in his paper entitled, "How Others Judge us Mennonites," he quoted extensively from an article by F. W. Hermann of the Berlin Baptist Church, in which the latter stated:

In the course of time their [the Mennonites'] teachings have undergone many-a-change. There are only few congregations (in Holland) that, today, still adhere to the old principles. They are well disposed to the state and many hold high offices in Holland. In Russia one group still clings to the original teachings and practices baptism by pouring. *The other group is really Baptist* [in its orientation] *and only retains the Mennonite name in order to retain the governmental privileges associated with that name* [my emphasis].<sup>1</sup>

Mennonite Brethren in Russia should thank Hermann for his acknowledging words, van der Smissen concluded, for if the governor of Taurida (van der Smissen was clearly referring to the 19-22 March events in Halbstadt) ever discovered Hermann's remarks, then "may God be merciful to the brothers there!" As to Braun he said: "Nor have I been quite

able to trust Br. Braun when, in a recent issue of his *Friedensstimme*, he energetically attempted to portray his church as not Baptist but thoroughly Mennonite. At the time I already thought he had special reasons for doing so."<sup>2</sup>

In another article in the same issue van der Smissen placed the Halbstadt incident into its larger context. He saw clearly that the more Russian governmental policies began to imitate those of Western European countries, the more the Russian Mennonites' vaunted *Privilegium* would be endangered. In the long run, Russian Mennonites would not be able maintain themselves in face of the *Gleichschaltung* (Russification) that was taking place with the introduction of new laws. The proposed law with respect to religious freedom made this amply apparent. In principle it allowed members of the Orthodox Church to leave the church and join other groups. Technically, however, local authorities threw so many roadblocks in the way of this happening that it remained a dead letter. Van der Smissen noted that Russian MBs were especially affected by the new law because they assumed that this new freedom allowed them to associate with Russian Christians as long as the latter did not physically join their churches. Consequently, they had built a number of *Vereinshaeuser* in which to propagate the Gospel. That had led to the Halbstadt investigation.<sup>3</sup>

As the above events were nearing their conclusion, both major Mennonite groups in Russia prepared to meet in their first joint general conference in Schönsee from 26-28 October, 1910. There appear to be no extensive records of this meeting such as were published in *Der Botschafter* for the next three general conferences. Only its resolutions were published in the *Friedensstimme*<sup>4</sup> and later in Ediger's *Beschlüsse*.<sup>5</sup> Neither of these contains anything that might remind the reader of the controversy unleashed by the Halbstadt investigation. Furthermore, the only issue even remotely connected with the work of the three deputies dealt with the keeping of church records, a topic broached by the head of the Department of Religious Affairs during his meeting with the Mennonite deputies on 4-5 March, 1910. To help clarify that matter, the conference had prepared and then revised what it called "a most devoted explanation" [*ergebenste Darlegung*] of Mennonite practices already declared adequate by the official during the March discussions.<sup>6</sup> It seemed that worries about the Sect/Confession legislation had subsided, and with it the overt – though perhaps not latent – suspicions of MB/Baptist activities.

The Halbstadt incident had made clear, as van der Smissen suggested, that even though the April, 1905 Manifesto had promised religious freedom, the Orthodox Church together with the local police and the St. Petersburg political authorities were not willing to tolerate reli-

gious proselytizing. Mennonite periodicals also began to carry stories from the *Odessaer Zeitung*, the *St. Petersburg Zeitung*, or even *Novoe Vremia* complaining that the promised freedoms had never arrived; indeed, that the Duma was beginning to look like just another branch of government rather than an independent organ representing the will of the Russian people.<sup>7</sup>

The old fears about being classified as a sect began to resurface with David H. Epp's announcement at the second United Mennonite General Conference held in Berdiansk from 23-25 August, 1911 that the *KfK* had received a telegram in May informing it that the "project," as the Mennonite papers called the new draft law dealing with religious freedom, had finally been resubmitted to the Duma. On 3 June, Epp, Braun and Abraham Klassen, who had been elected to the *KfK* upon Goerz's death, had met in Schönwiese to study the document. Mennonites in Russia, he informed the conference, confronted major decisions; nevertheless, the Duma committee established to study the "project" consisted of the most tolerant members. There was no doubt, Epp continued, that Russian Mennonites would have to submit to laws that were universally applicable, even though here and there exceptions might still be made. With regard to the new law specifically and in contrast to earlier drafts, an aspect that could portend trouble for the future was the provision with regard to the establishment of new congregations, each of which would have to be legally registered with the ministry and specifically approved by the local governors. Particularly churches whose congregations came under the jurisdiction of several different *gouvernements* could be adversely affected. The conference therefore requested that the *KfK* submit the following statement to the Duma committee:

The presently existing Mennonite congregations retain the right, granted them by the Russian rulers over more than 120 years, to establish congregations simply by registering with the Ministry of Internal Affairs irrespective of any decisions made by local governors, police, or other local political leaders.<sup>8</sup>

The conference sought to add a similar addendum to the part of the law dealing with the closing of churches, and another to the section dealing with the internal governance of the congregations and the larger conference structure through which they carried on their business. This last aspect indirectly addressed the Sect/Confession question since Mennonites worried that if they wished to be accepted as a confession they would have to create a synodal system of church governance; this could well mean the end of local congregational autonomy. It was not surprising, therefore, that a lively discussion followed Epp's presenta-

tion, the gist of which was that the projected new law was unsatisfactory. In the end, the conference requested that Epp's presentation be translated into Russian and presented to Duma Representative Kamensky, head of the committee on religion. The members even suggested that Mennonites needed a permanent representative in St. Petersburg during the Duma debates on the proposed law, and recommended that Epp be their man. He declined, however, pleading the press of his teaching obligations.<sup>9</sup>

In June, 1911 the *Friedensstimme* carried an article on the Baptist World Conference in Philadelphia which Russian delegates had attended. The delegates had been personally presented to the conference and over \$100,000 raised to establish a Baptist seminary either in St. Petersburg or Moscow. The Tsar was to be petitioned for his permission. When news of this reached the Russian press, irate articles about "religious fanatics" appeared asserting that religious pluralism would destroy the nation.<sup>10</sup> Other *Friedensstimme* articles told of problems created in German colonies by Russian teachers of inferior quality who sought to hide their inadequacies by slanderously attacking the colonists in the Russian press.<sup>11</sup> Other than that all seemed quiet on the religious front.

On 5 October the *KfK* met for a consultation in Ekaterinoslav where Epp read a Russian translation of the report he had given at the conference in Berdiansk. The Russian representative at the conference, no doubt Bondar, had requested that it be translated. The *KfK* members therefore also decided that a copy should be given to Kamensky in the Duma,<sup>12</sup> and Cornelius Unruh was asked to do so. At the meeting in the Duma where this took place, Unruh read through the document with Kamensky, whereupon the latter informed Unruh that some of the things Mennonites desired would never be granted. For one thing, he said, their fears regarding local governmental interference were overblown. Kamensky nevertheless promised Unruh that he would discuss the document with Kharuzin and inform the *KfK* of the outcome. In the meantime, the *KfK* elected Epp as its chairman. He immediately proceeded to draft a document in the Russian language describing the organization of the Mennonite Church to be distributed among Duma representatives. The document is not described, but Epp was asked to have it printed for distribution.<sup>13</sup>

On 16 December, Epp met with Bergmann and Kamensky for a lengthy discussion about the "project." At the meeting Kamensky stated that he doubted the draft law would come up for a reading during the current session. Epp then raised the matter of the law regarding military service for sectarians. But Kamensky assured him that any such law would not affect the Mennonites.

On 13 January, 1912, the Commission met in Schönwiese for another consultation; this one dealt primarily with the keeping of church registers. Notices on how registers were to be kept were subsequently placed in all the Mennonite papers. Only a few weeks later, on 1 February, the Commission's members were startled by newspaper accounts reporting that the law regarding the military service of sectarians was to undergo a thorough revision. They immediately telegraphed Bergmann and Kamensky, but were informed there was nothing to worry about. Telegrams of 8 and 9 March from the two representatives told a different story, however. These reported that the Duma had rejected Kamensky's proposal that sectarians serve as non-combatants, but for twice the length of time as someone in active military service. Instead, the Duma had accepted a recommendation by Representative Baratynski that would allow the government to regulate the matter in a new law as it saw fit.

At the request of the *KfK*, a number of persons representing the *Kirchenkonvent* met with the Commission in Schönwiese on 13 March to discuss these developments. Those present decided, before taking any action, to await the return of the Duma representatives from their Easter recess when Unruh and Epp could meet with them. Immediately after that meeting, the entire *KfK* met in Halbstadt; it called for a joint meeting of the Ekaterinoslav, Taurida, and Kherson *Kirchenkonvente* in Schönwiese for 9 April. At this meeting it was decided to produce a document delineating the Mennonite attitude to military service and its history. To assist the *KfK* in the preparation of this document, its members chose Bishops Isaak Dyck and Heinrich Unruh, Rev. P. Friesen, Mr. John Neufeld, teacher John Braeul, together with the lawyers K. Unruh, P. Funk and Julius v. Kampen. This group, less Unruh, Braeul and Klassen, met in Ekaterinoslav on 17 April to work on the document.

In the meantime, members of the *KfK* were sent into the various Mennonite districts to hold *Bruderschaft* meetings to inform church members about matters pending in the Duma. In May, Epp and Braun traveled to St. Petersburg and, upon their return, called a number of *Konvent* gatherings where they reported on the trip. On 18 July the *KfK* met for the last time before the pending general conference in order to finalize its presentations to that body.<sup>14</sup> By the time the conference was in session it had become apparent that the draft law on religious freedom would not come up for discussion in the third Duma. Once again, Mennonites could take a deep breath and relax. As a result, the conference turned its primary attention to the keeping of church registers. After a discussion of that subject, it commissioned the *KfK* to prepare a model register for use in the churches.

Having dispatched the issue of church registers once and for all Epp launched into a report on the Duma and the proposed new law regard-

ing the military service of sectarians. He described Kamensky's proposal but informed the conference that it had been rejected in favor of one by Baratynski which gave the government *carte blanche* in the matter. Since Mennonites had been included in Kamensky's original proposal, and since they were continually mentioned in the Duma debates on the issue, Epp argued that Mennonites would undoubtedly be included in any new law that touched on the matter. The *KfK* therefore felt obligated to inform the conference of this fact and seek its counsel: but there was little urgency at the moment since the present Duma had postponed any action on the matter. That did not mean that the fourth Duma would not act upon it, however.

In the discussion that followed Epp's report, three suggestions were offered on how to proceed, one of which was to allow the *KfK* to do whatever it deemed best in the matter. No sooner had the latter suggestion been made than Epp recommended that the *KfK* prepare a brochure in the Russian language to be disseminated to the Duma representatives. The conference agreed, creating a special committee to evaluate the content and edit the finished product. The committee met that very evening and decided to publish the brochure. The very next day, 19 October, the conference passed a resolution to that effect.<sup>15</sup>

What document was it that Epp had in readiness so that it could be edited and approved by an *ad hoc* committee virtually on the spur of the moment? There is a copy in the St. Petersburg archives; it is entitled, *Mennonites in Russia*.<sup>16</sup> Some thirty-eight printed pages in length, the document consists of two major chapters: the first treats of Mennonite origins; the second, of the Mennonites in Russia. Epp's imprint is all over the piece, especially Chapter I which is very reminiscent of his 1910 "Zur Geschichte der Entstehung der Mennoniten" (On the History of Mennonite Origins) with its Ludwig Keller theory. The second chapter consists of sections on: 1) Mennonite immigration to Russia and the privileges granted them, quoting in full Paul I's great *Privilegium*; 2) Mennonite views on freedom of conscience and religious propaganda, taken largely from the 1910 *Explanatory Supplement*; and 3) Mennonites and military service. This last section was probably developed after the 9 April, 1912 meeting of the *KfK* in conjunction with a number of *Kirchenkonvent* members drawn from Ekaterinoslav, Taurida, and Kherson. The brochure was therefore pieced together from a number of earlier documents with a new section added on Mennonites and military service.<sup>17</sup> This last section makes it apparent that another element had been added to the Sect/Confession debate, and that was the threat of having their military exemption removed if Mennonites were to be declared a sect by the government.

While most of the brochure consisted of material borrowed from

previous Mennonite documents, it is nonetheless important to present an overall impression of this 1912 booklet.<sup>18</sup> Once again the document begins with the proposed 1907 law that had listed the Mennonites as a "sect." After arguing that this was contrary to Russian law, the author(s) proceeded to a definition of a sect and demonstrated, on the basis of Mennonite doctrine and Keller's research, that Mennonites had never broken away from any church; rather, they constituted a denomination that had an historical pedigree going back all the way to the time of Christ. Though Keller's arguments had been attacked, no one had ever been able to refute his evidence.

As in previous histories of this kind, the document stressed the Russian Mennonites' relationship to Menno Simons but insisted that the Dutch reformer had not founded a new movement or a new church, nor had he had anything to do with the Münsterites. Indeed, his teachings, as Keller had argued, were derived from the old-evangelical brotherhoods, called by different names in different countries, all of which traced their origin to the time at least prior to Constantine and Pope Sylvester when the large church had become secularized and corrupt. In the twelfth century the most prominent of these brotherhoods had been the Waldenses. The sixth century Code of Justinian, with its condemnation of adult baptism [sic], and later Catholic inquisitors confirmed the antiquity of the movement. The writer insisted that this interpretation had been confirmed by the work of Samuel Cramer and Adolf von Harnack, with most other scholars agreeing that the movement went back at least as far as the Middle Ages. Clearly, Mennonites could not be a sect since their antiquity was historically established, they had never broken with the primitive apostolic church, their doctrines and practices clearly overlapped with those of the New Testament and primitive church, and their church organization reflected that of the early church. Keller appeared to be an extremely useful historian; no wonder Epp had all of his books in the Chortitza church library. He had read them well. What he had not read well, however, were the histories of the Russian Orthodox Church in general and Pobedonostsev's "one true church" interpretation in particular. Epp, as well as his interpretation, were anchored in a Western European historical tradition, that of Pobedonostsev in that of the Eastern Church. Yet though their viewpoints were "worlds apart," they both claimed absolute truth for their respective positions. The essential difference was that the Russian Orthodox Church had the power of the Russian State behind it; the Mennonites were in the process of losing what support they had previously enjoyed from that state.

This initial seven-page statement is followed by a considerably lengthier chapter on the Mennonites in Russia. It begins with a brief



description of the condition of the Prussian Mennonites, Catherine the Great's 1763 Manifesto, and the conditions offered Mennonites coming to Russia. A particular emphasis is laid on the grant of complete religious freedom (p. 9), the Mennonite right to appoint their ministers, establish their own schools and build their own churches, and their exemption from any and all forms of military service. All of this, the Tsarina's Manifesto had declared, would be confirmed in a *Privilegium* handwritten by the emperor himself; and so it was in 1800. The latter had then been confirmed on 9 November, 1838 by Tsar Nicholas I.

There follows a citation of the Russian laws that referred to Mennonites as a confession/denomination. With the exception of the military law of 1875 that had erroneously referred to them as a sect, the document insists that they had never been so classified and should not now be so classified by the Duma. Thereupon the 1908 "The Mennonite Position on the Issue of Propaganda and Religious Freedom" is quoted, even to the extent of listing five of the signatories. The document then returns to a discussion of Russian law and its designation of Mennonites as a confession. It argues that Russian law basically listed only two categories of "faiths" in the empire: the Christian faith and that of the infidels. Under the former, there was the Orthodox Church and the foreign Christian denominations. In Russian law only those who had broken away from the Orthodox Church could be considered a sect.

After describing the qualifications of the church's "spiritual leaders" and the method of their election, the document speaks of the church's "sacraments,"<sup>19</sup> and the offices of bishop, preacher/teacher, and deacon within it. It discusses their training and the organizational structure of the church. Excerpts from the 1910 "Explanatory Supplement" to the 1908 document on religious freedom and propaganda follow, and the second chapter concludes with a section on Mennonites and military service.

That a section on the Mennonite doctrine of nonresistance should have been included in a document dealing primarily with the Sect/Confession issue is testimony to the fact that the Russian Mennonites had become aware of the issue's ramifications. It begins with a declaration that Christ's kingdom is a kingdom of love and peace, and that Mennonites have become a part of this kingdom through transformation into "new creatures." Quoting extensively from Christ's Sermon on the Mount regarding the suffering of persecution and love of enemies, the document argues that evil must be conquered by good, not by war and the sword. Mennonites therefore not only reject the weapons of war, but also the weapons of self-defense. Together with Christ, they bless rather than curse. Even now, as in the past, they are willing to suffer for these truths.<sup>20</sup> These statements are then placed into the Keller/Old-

Evangelical Brotherhood tradition that reached all the way back to the apostolic church. Once more, Menno is referred to as the organizer, not founder, of the Mennonite Church who was strongly opposed to the Münsterite revolutionaries. The writer apparently thought it important to emphasize the latter in order to fortify his assertion that Mennonites had always been nonresistant. Klaus's Thomas Müntzer is passed over in silence.

Having described their religious convictions regarding violence, the document turns to the military exemption crisis of 1873 and the various Mennonite appeals to the emperor on the matter, citing the Russian government documents guaranteeing this freedom and the ultimate agreement to allow Mennonites to fulfill their military service in the forestry camps. It concludes by citing the 1879, 1908, and 1912 laws on Mennonites and the military: the first exempted all Mennonites from military service, allowing them to substitute service in the forestry camps in its place; the last two limiting this exemption to those Mennonites who had entered the country or joined the "sect" before 1 January, 1874 – in other words, only to those who had either entered the country or joined the church before the universal conscription law of 1873 had been issued.

The proposed new law regarding religious freedom had, however, as we have already noted, been withdrawn by the government from the fourth Duma elected in 1912. The third United Mennonite General Conference, meeting in Rudnerweide from 13-15 August, 1913, reflected this; the Sect/Confession issue was not so much as mentioned there. Not until 11 April, 1914 did David H. Epp return to the topic in his paper. And he did so then only to report that a number of Mennonites felt that now, during this hiatus, was the time to petition the government for confessional status. In order to do so, however, Mennonites had first to draw up a church constitution since they had never possessed such a written document that might have been recognized by the government. To be acknowledged as a confession, such a constitution acceptable to all Mennonites was not only indispensable but also required by the authorities. Some people, Epp observed, were already working on such a document, but it was not yet ready. As soon as it was, it would be presented to the congregations for discussion.<sup>21</sup>

On 18 April Epp reported that it appeared that the government was about ready to reintroduce its draft law on religious toleration; in it, Mennonites were once again listed under "sects." Should this become law congregations in new Mennonite settlements could be established only with the permission of local governors. Such a law, in force with regard to sectarians, was already being selectively applied to Mennonites. What recourse could be had if a local governor refused his per-

mission for such a church? If problems could not be resolved within the time allotted, a governor could even choose to close the church down completely. The cause for such action might be minor, Epp argued; the consequences, however, disastrous.<sup>22</sup>

Only a few days earlier, from 11-12 April, 1914, a consultation had taken place on whether or not Russian Mennonites should constitute themselves as an "Evangelical-Mennonite Confession." Present had been Heinrich Unruh, Muntau, P. M. Friesen, Tiege, David H. Epp, Berdiansk, A. A. Klassen, Neuhalbstadt, Abram K. Fast, Neuhalbstadt, Johann J. Klassen, Ekaterinoslav, Wilhelm Dyck, Millerovo, Peter J. Penner, Chortiza, Kornelius K. Wiens, Neuhalbstadt, Heinrich J. Braun, Neuhalbstadt, Leonhard Sudermann, Berdiansk, David J. Klassen, Neuhalbstadt, Johann H. Willms, Halbstadt, Benjamin H. Unruh, Halbstadt, Johann Klassen, Kronsweide, and Peter J. Braun, Neuhalbstadt. There are two reports on this consultation: a brief one in *Der Botschafter*,<sup>23</sup> and P. M. Friesen's *Konfession oder Sekte* (Confession or Sect).<sup>24</sup> Both documents make it apparent that, at this critical juncture in their dealings with both the Duma and the Russian government, the old and very contentious issue of "religious propaganda" had surfaced yet once again to trouble the relationship between the two main Russian Mennonite Churches.

The consultative body had no sooner elected Abraham Klassen of Neuhalbstadt to chair the meeting than Peter J. Penner of Chortitza made the following declaration:

The Chortitza *Konvent* [church leadership] and – to the extent that it was expressed at the last *Bruderschaft* meeting held in Chortitza on 8 April of last year – also the congregation are of the opinion that any attempt to persuade the government [of our position] in the matter of a confessional status through united action with the Mennonite Brethren would be utterly useless [aussichtslos sei].<sup>25</sup>

Penner justified this inflammatory statement<sup>26</sup> by arguing that

The government forbids preaching among the adherents of the state religion. The Mennonites [Old Church] have observed this law for 125 years; therefore, the government must not be provided with an excuse to assume that Mennonites have become unfaithful to their principles. [On the other hand], the missionary activity of the Mennonite Brethren churches among adherents of other faiths has – it cannot be denied – caused many problems, brought on persecution, difficult situations, indeed even legal action and expulsion. That being the case, the Chortitza Mennonites do not wish to be identified before the government in this regard with the Mennonite Brethren. Should it happen nevertheless, one should not expect that we will be successful in our efforts to be recognized as a confession.<sup>27</sup>

At this point the two accounts part company: the report in *Der Botschafter* saying only that a lively debate followed Penner's declaration; P. M. Friesen, describing in considerable detail what was said in the debate. Apparently Penner's statement, which seemed to insinuate that the government's re-classification of Mennonites as a sect was connected to the MBs proselytizing among the Orthodox, took everyone by surprise. For according to Friesen, even Penner's Chortitza colleagues "said nothing." Only Old Church leaders from the Molotschna like David J. Klassen and MBs like Friesen himself and H. J. Braun spoke out against Penner. Not a word was said by David H. Epp – himself from Chortitza and chair of the *KfK* – a signal lapse of leadership perhaps because he felt compromised by his earlier exchange with Braun and Kroeker. Whatever the case, the divide between the Old Church members from Chortitza, on the one hand, and the MBs and Old Church members from the Molotschna, on the other, had become only too evident. To P. M. Friesen, who had believed that old prejudices and animosities had diminished, this came as a rude shock.

In the discussion that followed Penner's anti-MB salvo, the Chortitza leader brought up the 19-22 March, 1910 investigation of the Halbstadt MBs in general and the Raduga Press in particular as an example of the kind of problems MBs were creating for all Russian Mennonites with their illegal religious propaganda.<sup>28</sup> This elicited a sharp rejoinder from H. J. Braun who conceded that such an investigation had taken place. However, he asserted, "there was never any proof presented that any illegal propaganda had taken place; on the contrary, the vice governor told me, as he interrogated me for the third time (in the night of the 21<sup>st</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> March, around 3:00 AM) and as the last person to be so interrogated, laying his hand on the transcripts: 'I want now to say a few things quite openly to you. I cannot say how the governor will judge this matter. But I sit before you as his representative with unrestricted powers and could, had I discovered any infraction whatsoever, impose the most severe penalties a governor is capable of prescribing. But I see I can leave everything as it was without taking any action whatsoever.'" Braun asserted that the vice governor had repeated this conclusion a number of times.

When, however, Bishop Heinrich Unruh, the author of the original article dealing with the investigation, countered Braun's statement with his "Yes, but to me the vice governor said with raised finger: 'Warn your preachers and the Rückenauers, and tell them that they are not to propagandize,'" Braun pointed out that Unruh had been interrogated on the night of the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup>, whereas he (Braun) had been interrogated the next night as the last person. Hence, the vice governor's statement to him had in effect been his last word on the subject. And that word, as others present confirmed, had been substantiated by the governor

himself on a subsequent personal visit to Halbstadt. On that occasion in July, H. J. Braun had asked the governor directly if any transgressions had been uncovered by his investigation. The governor had responded by saying: "Had anything been uncovered, I would have known what had to be done." He had taken no action because there had been no infraction. P. M. Friesen added to this that every Russian religious document published by Raduga had first to pass inspection by the censors, and not one had as yet ever been prohibited. Having failed to make their case with regard to the Taurida vice governor's investigation, the attackers turned to other isolated instances of, and persons involved in, religious propaganda in the MB and Old Church ranks. From the direction the discussion took it was clear that no one present was aware of the central government's reaction to that investigation, a reaction that was apparently quite different from that of the governor and his office.

The vice governor's investigation of the Raduga Press and the Halbstadt *Vereinshaus* was clearly perceived by all parties as a pivotal event in their recent history, an event that crystallized attitudes all around; even the attitude of the St. Petersburg authorities. On the one hand, there were the regional Russian authorities, in this case symbolized by the Taurida vice governor. Described by Kroeker as a reactionary of the worst kind, he represented the local political power brokers who clearly, as the record testifies, enjoyed exercising power over others in order to intimidate them. He also clearly had strong ties to the Russian Orthodox Church whose rights, privileges, and prerogatives he appeared intent on protecting even though his supervision of sectarian activity was lax. No separation of Church and State here in spite of the Manifesto on Religious Toleration. And for the same reasons that had motivated established churches since the time of Constantine, that church was paranoid about other groups coming in and stealing away some of its "sheep," no matter that it did not feed them properly.<sup>29</sup> There was no interest in an open and free exchange of ideas on religion, no interest in open competition. The documents relevant to the Russian Mennonites in the St. Petersburg archives make this abundantly clear. Then there was the law forbidding religious propaganda; had that law been suspended by the 17 April, 1905 proclamation on religious toleration? Here was arrogance, power, entrenched privilege, and just enough ambiguity for reasonable doubt in the Manifesto that had not yet been established in law to allow even well-meaning people to get into trouble, especially since this proclamation appears to have been contradicted by the secret circulars emanating from the Ministry of Internal Affairs under Durnovo and by Stolypin's statement that MB proselytizing activity constituted a "systematic abuse of the religious freedom law." In the face of such a situation both groups of Russian Mennonites

had to be on their guard, especially at a time of increasing Russian animosity toward "outsiders."<sup>30</sup>

Then there were the Old Church and the Mennonite Brethren. The latter had, from a position of unwarranted moral superiority, leveled charges of corruption and moral laxity against the former in 1860, at least initially. The Old Church, stung by the criticism as much as by the revolt, reacted predominantly in anger, sought to suppress the schismatics, and justified the internal corruption with Augustine's old misinterpretation of the Parable of the Tares. The residual animosities long outlasted the original participants themselves despite the best efforts of irenic individuals on both sides to bring about a rapprochement. After he had experienced the above events and had had his illusions shattered, P. M. Friesen said of this relationship:

When I, in 1912 a few years after the completion of my *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia*, was able once again to leave my sickbed, I had the irrepressible desire to see, hear, and taste my much beloved Mennonite people in the very flesh, no longer only on paper. During the lengthy period of time that I resided outside of any Mennonite community and wrote my history, a great Mennonite patriotism and optimism had welled up within me, causing me to see things through rose-colored glasses. This was especially the case with respect to Old Church/MB relations. I believed that the Old Church members, at least in their most important leaders (not in their majority), tolerated the Brethren, at the very least did not harbor ill-will toward them, and were able to judge right and wrong on both sides impartially from an historical perspective. For some time I moved in Old Church circles, found much warm and brotherly recognition and was convinced I had not been mistaken in my historical conclusions. I held the majority of the Brethren (the old "Rückenausers," as the most recent "Lichtfelders" and the "Altonau-Sagradovkaers") to be more intolerant and partisan than the leading bishops, ministers, and congregations on the other side. (Even today, I find that the MBs by and large, with the exception of a minority of brothers and sisters and, I don't know how many ministers, do not understand tolerance and impartiality.)<sup>31</sup>

But Friesen soon found that he had been mistaken, for aside from a few positive evaluations of his history from Old Church representatives, the great majority saw him as partisan and an enemy of their church. This was followed by the Neuhalbstadt consultation which destroyed any lingering illusions. His *Konfession oder Sekte* was a cry of pain; 1860 was apparently alive and well. Prejudice, intolerance, self-righteousness and resentment – all "good" Anabaptist/Christian virtues – were very much at home among God's "chosen people." The Halbstadt investigation was all it took to make them surface yet once more.

At the heart of the vice governor's investigation, of course, was the suspicion that MBs had indulged in illegal religious propaganda. As it turned out, they had not, at least not officially. But members of the Old

Church nevertheless quite apparently continued to believe they had and drew the line fairly broadly as to what constituted such illegal activity. This suspicion had been present in Old Church circles as well as among some governmental officials since 1860. And it was as though both groups were poised to pounce upon the MBs at the slightest provocation that it might be so.<sup>32</sup> If it was not in this specific instance – and P. M. Friesen's pamphlet makes it quite apparent that the investigation did not result in any criminal prosecution because of it – it was nonetheless Bondar's suspicion and St. Petersburg's conviction that such activity was going on that triggered the 1910 investigation. But no one aside from Bondar, Stolypin and the Taurida governor's office appears to have known this.<sup>33</sup>

One of the aspects of the investigation that puzzled H. J. Braun from the very outset was the presence of the local Russian director of the Molotschna public schools. Braun may well have thought that such a person would not have been involved unless he and/or one of his colleagues had been the one to bring the charge. But as we have seen, this was not the case. Braun's puzzlement as to who might have instigated the investigation is nonetheless important because if he did not know, it is unlikely that anyone else did. And ignorance in that regard simply gave rise to the wildest of speculations and accusations. The more so since nearly everyone involved had his own axe to grind and was more than willing to grind it.

On the other hand, the fact that Braun sent a copy of his report, prepared for the governor of Taurida, to Pavlov in the Department of Religious Affairs could well indicate that he suspected that the investigation had been triggered by the St. Petersburg government itself. That suspicion is articulated in the following, very insightful analysis of the event by an anonymous author:

Much more problematic and serious was the Taurida governor's investigation of Raduga, the largest Mennonite publishing firm in Russia, made on the authority of a command from on high because of its propagandistic activity in word and print designed to support Russian preachers in their missionary activity among their people. To be sure, this large firm did not only have a tremendous influence upon the larger [Russian] Mennonite community; it also influenced the Russian Baptists and Evangelical Christians. The preacher Prokhanov, leading personality in these last two groups, was also a member of [Raduga's] Board of Directors. Many Russian pamphlets, books and even song-books were printed by Raduga, to be sure all with the permission of the censors. [Mennonite] congregations involved in this work also did it legally. Even the now rare large study by P.M. Friesen, *Geschichte der Alt-evangelischen Mennoniten Bruderschaft in Russland* (1911), was printed here. But the various interrogations during that painful investigation soon made it apparent that Raduga was not alone under attack; what was at issue was the MB Church as

such and its relationship to other Mennonites, the Evangelical Christians, and the Baptists – a relationship analyzed on the basis of with whom the MBs shared communion and with whom they refused to do so, etc. The investigation lasted several days. Heinrich J. Braun, as director of the publishing firm, was to a certain extent the chief witness. As such, he carried the burden of the responsibility even though other members of the firm were also interrogated, even prominent members of the other Mennonite church. The firm was under the exclusive direction of members of the MB Church. After the conclusion of the investigation the high official pronounced his verdict, roughly as follows: “Even though I have unlimited powers from above to deal with the firm or persons in accordance with the findings of this investigation, I find no cause to order any administrative measures.” That verdict was the direct result of God’s answer to the prayers of his children in their hour of need. Nevertheless, this event was not publicized either in the Mennonite press or in the MB congregations. It took place only a few years before the outbreak of World War I, where the world – in July, 1914 – broke out in flames that have not been quenched to this day. And what was the reason for the investigation? The governor, naturally, did not divulge one. Might it have been one last attempt not only to destroy Raduga, but also to attack the MB Church by labeling it ‘Baptist’?

As we have seen, the Baptist/MB relationship may have been the focal point of the governor’s investigation, but it was not what concerned Stolypin. The latter had concerns that were much larger, concerns that encompassed a well-coordinated sectarian threat to all of Southern Russia.

One wonders what might have come of the incident had H. J. Braun not been so conscious of the suspicious ill-will against MBs amongst members of the Old Church and, because of it, felt compelled to respond obliquely to the investigation in his “Mennonite or Baptist,” or if David H. Epp, in magnanimous generosity, had resisted the temptation to attack his MB counterpart on the *KfK* because of it? With those two statements the incident’s ripple effect expanded until the waves threatened to engulf both groups in the 11-12 April, 1914 consultation in Neuhalbstadt, only some five months before World War I was to confront Russian Mennonites with a host of much more serious problems in which greater unity might have served them better.

In his letter of 24 May, 1914 to Peter Braun, who, as we have seen, attended the Neuhalbstadt consultation, Andres asked an important question: “Why,” he asked, “could one still, after 1905 – let us say 1910 in Schönsee – reach an agreement that united all Mennonite congregations, in spite of the fact that it was precisely during the period prior to that time that the greatest ‘sins’ were committed for which one now so sharply castigates the MBs, which one now lays at their doorstep above all else: ‘propaganda’! Why was it not then a hindrance to cooperation, and why is it today the only accusation that one formulates with any precision and is unafraid to utter . . . ?” What had changed between



1910 and 1914? According to Andres, the ill-will of the Chortitza Mennonites had certainly not changed. They had always, he argued, been as "bloodthirsty" as they were now. And Andres belonged to the Old Church.

According to Andres, the reason why something like what happened at Neuhalbstadt had not taken place around 1905, or even 1910, lay in the changing political climate in Russia. He observed:

... I believe that the entire episode is the sad but inevitable result of the current political reaction in Russia. We read and see daily, indeed hourly, the demoralizing effects of the reaction in all areas [of life], in all segments of the population, in all currents of intellectual thought, etc. *How then should a religious fellowship that is above all else concerned to preserve its civil advantages and privileges, remain uninfluenced* [my emphasis]? In my opinion, that is unthinkable. The proofs for my above contention are apparent. Why did not this issue come up after 1905? Why right now? After all, we do not live on the moon, but are rooted – however much we may wish to deny it – in the reality that surrounds us.

The defense of privilege, it was all about the defense of privilege. Religious propaganda was not the issue, it was only the pretext. What was at stake was that Old Church Mennonites could lose their privileges and perhaps much more if they were declared to be a sect; and their association with MBs, who appeared to be on the wrong side of the religious propaganda issue, appeared to be the cause. This had not been the case in 1905 just after the April 17 proclamation of religious toleration when Mennonites, especially MBs, believed a new era of religious liberty to be dawning in Russia. At that time religious propaganda had not appeared to be a threat to their privileges. However, after the Raduga investigation of 1910 and the growing reaction, a reaction in all likelihood exacerbated by the government's "findings" in that investigation, that threat appeared to be on the increase once more. In 1908 all Mennonites had agreed to the statement that, according to Christ's Great Commission, it was the duty of every Christian to help spread the Gospel. Though the document had qualified this statement, asserting that Mennonites did not actively "propagandize" among other Christian confessions, Mennonites were nevertheless convinced that only the propagation of the Gospel in its original purity and simplicity could bring about the salvation of souls as well as a new social order on earth. According to P. M. Friesen and especially Abraham Braun, the MB Church and some leaders of the Old Church had begun to act on these assumptions, only to find themselves investigated in 1910. When that happened, at least the Chortitza Mennonites and, according to P. M. Friesen, a majority from the Old Church chose to regard the defense of

their privileges as more important than compliance with Christ's command to preach the Gospel to every creature.

It was for this reason that, after his initial salvo at the Neuhalbstadt consultation, Penner and his partisans had brought up virtually every instance of an MB "infraction" of the religious propaganda law, even making the assertion, according to P. M. Friesen:

[that] these were proofs of the forbidden, illegal propaganda that would damage the entire Mennonite brotherhood and – had to be regarded as a breach of the "promise" made by our immigrating fathers on the basis of which they had been granted the *Privilegium*.<sup>34</sup>

Years later, J. H. Janzen, Peter Braun's close friend and Old Church bishop in Kitchener, Ontario, wrote in an essay, entitled: "Br. Hermann Fast's Konjunktiv," that it pained him to have to admit that he was a descendant of those Mennonites "who once made the godless promise that they would not make any propaganda for the Mennonite [doctrine]."<sup>35</sup> Quite a difference between Penner's statement made at Neuhalbstadt in 1914 and Janzen's made from Canada some thirteen years later; both were members of the Old Church. Much had, of course, happened in the interim; but Janzen would have taken the same position in 1914 he took in 1927.

P. M. Friesen gave Penner the same answer in 1914 that Peter Braun gave Janzen in 1927: "Where is the document," Friesen asked, "which contains such a promise? In all my historical research I have not found it."<sup>36</sup> But Braun went beyond a purely negative response; he sought to explain why such an argument had been made at that particular time. The argument, he said, had first arisen "when the MBs began to involve themselves in the work of evangelization among the Russians." The implication was that the argument had been concocted out of whole cloth to accomplish perhaps two things: first, to justify the general, though not total, uninvolvedness of the Old Church in the fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission; second, to put the onus on the MBs for breaking an ancient pledge, thereby shifting the blame from their own shoulders. Perhaps they were only doing what MBs did when it came to their association with the Baptists, disassociating themselves from the latter as much as possible in order not to lose their Mennonite privileges.<sup>37</sup>

Yet in spite of Penner's bombshell and the resulting "lively discussion," as *Der Botschafter* report described it, more sober heads prevailed and the deliberations concerning the "Draft Proposal for a Constitution of the Evangelical Mennonite Confession" went forward. And the deliberations did indeed result in a constitution that was sent

to all church leaders for discussion in their *Bruderschaft* meetings.<sup>38</sup> In an explanatory supplement that accompanied the report in *Der Botschafter*, also written by David H. Epp, the choice of terms, such as "synod" over "conference," "Evangelical" Mennonite Confession, and the change from "Commission for Church Related Affairs" to "Committee for Matters Relating to the Evangelical Mennonite Confession," was explained.<sup>39</sup> What was not explained was why the draft proposal used the term "sacrament," rather than the Mennonite term, "ordinance." The use of the non-Mennonite term, among other things, was almost immediately attacked in an anonymous article in *Der Botschafter* of 20 May, 1914. There the author wrote: "The word 'sacrament' should not appear [in a document] dealing with Mennonite church polity since it contradicts the traditional Mennonite interpretation."<sup>40</sup>

The "mere layman," as the above author designated himself, was indeed a most astute critic. He argued, for example, that one might be able to effect organizational unity, but if the unity of faith and dogma were absent real unity would prove elusive. In this regard, he asserted, the document ignored both history and the traditional independence of the local congregations. Beyond that, the draft confused parish and congregation, was imprecise as to leaders and their roles, and the qualifications and voting rights of members at *Bruderschaft* meetings. He also desired clarification of the role of the lawyer who was to become a member of the Committee for Matters Relating to the Evangelical Mennonite Confession, and he wished to know why individual congregations were given a choice whether or not to join the "synod." If the synod had no say in the matter, he asserted, it would be stillborn.<sup>41</sup>

Ten days later a "Mennonite observer" registered his dissent from the proposed constitution. He regarded it as the product of panic. Furthermore, the decision to opt for a consistory rather than be thrown to the mercy of the local police demonstrated a lack of faith. Perhaps, he suggested, the whole thing was a power grab by a few Mennonite churchmen who wished to dictate from above. His advice was: "halte was du hast!" (hold onto what you have).<sup>42</sup> In an editorial comment Epp conceded that the draft constitution would change the internal functioning of the Mennonite Church, but it would also, he asserted, enable it to deal more effectively with the State and help to preserve its privileges in the process. He justified early action on the matter by citing the preventive measures taken by their forebears during the 1873 military conscription crisis. In that instance, early action had warded off the worst effects of the law in the Mennonite communities.

Only one more article on the subject appeared before the paper was shut down because of the war; it was a report on the Lichtenau *Bruder-*

*schaft* meeting held to discuss the draft constitution. An animated meeting, it had ended before all aspects could be adequately discussed. Even so, members had registered their disagreement on a number of counts and suggested some specific terminological clarifications and other minor alterations. The writer did not reveal what Lichtenau thought of the draft constitution as such, however.<sup>43</sup>

In between these discussions of the draft constitution, the old contentious issue of whether MBs were or were not Baptists surfaced one more time. Sometime in 11-12 April, 1914, perhaps to coincide with the consultation in Neuhalbstadt, an "interested observer" raised the question in the pages of the *Bürger-Zeitung*. Once again, it was H. J. Braun who responded. His essay was entitled: "Zur Mennonitenfrage: An den Herrn Interessenten in Nr. 49 der *Bürger-Zeitung*" ("Concerning the Question as to who is a Mennonite: Directed to the Interested Party in Nr. 49 of the *Bürger-Zeitung*").<sup>44</sup> His brief essay added little to the discussion, but no one seemed to care much anymore. For other, more pressing concerns were beginning to loom on the horizon. By June rumors of war with Austria began to circulate; Russia's declaration of war was announced in *Der Botschafter* on 20 July, 1914. On the 25<sup>th</sup> came the announcement of Germany's declaration of war against Russia. Shortly thereafter, the Duma, in a fit of patriotism, temporarily closed its doors so as not to impede the Tsarist government's initial war efforts. This meant, in effect, that the government's draft law on the religion of foreign settlers was put on the shelf for the duration of the war. Upon the collapse of the Tsarist government, however, Mennonites once more took up the matter of the draft constitution dealing with the "Evangelical Mennonite Confession." On 17-18 September, 1917, members of the *KfK* (the proposed name change had never taken effect), together with some twenty-seven specially invited guests, once more addressed the issue. Once again a draft constitution was approved.<sup>45</sup> But this time the events of the Bolshevik October Revolution intervened to prevent its implementation on a permanent basis. The chaos that followed turned Russian Mennonites to much more basic concerns: those of survival in an increasingly hostile environment.

## PART III

---

# **Ethnic Minorities and the War:**

Mennonite Isolation, Opposition  
to Russification, and the  
Coming of Land Liquidation



# “Do you not know that every German is a spy?”

*But the real driving force of the campaign against enemy aliens did not come so much from the traditional monarchist Right or Russian National factions as from a broad press campaign and popular movement that gained prominent supporters from a wide range of the political spectrum, from the far Right to moderate liberals. While the far Right mixed agitation against Jews, socialists, liberals, Poles, and others with its agitation against enemy aliens, this broader movement focused on the largest and most influential subset of the enemy-alien category: the various ethnic Germans living within the empire. More than any other aspect of the mobilization against enemy aliens, it was the “internal German threat” which captured the public imagination and created the greatest volume of discussion.*

– Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire: The Campaign against Enemy Aliens during World War I*

In an undated letter to the Bluffton historian C. Henry Smith, David Rempel argued that Peter Braun’s *Kto takie Mennonity* had been “published in 1914 by the Russian Mennonites at a time when the Russian government first considered a series of measures to expropriate the German colonists of Russia.” In it, Mennonites had appealed to be exempt “from the application of this legislation,” arguing that whereas they might be “German in culture, they were of Dutch origin.” The purpose of the pamphlet, then, had been to prove the latter contention while at the same time giving “a brief historical sketch of the Mennonites.”<sup>11</sup> In his translation of the pamphlet’s title page, however, Rempel listed the document as being a “Publication of the Halbstadt Volost Government,” considerably narrowing the scope of its original backing. Yet his contention has never been established. What we do know at this point is that Peter Braun wrote the document and that his brother’s press published it. How many persons were actually involved in the venture, and where the “Dutch argument” came from, has remained unclear. Benjamin Unruh, in his letter of 24 February, 1944 to H. J. Braun, asserted that a number of persons had been involved, but he also argued that Peter Braun alone was responsible for the finished product. Nor did the first and second Russian editions overtly state that the pamphlet addressed the land liquidation laws. The 1933 German translation,

which Rempel never saw, did so, however, giving the subtitle as: "Concerning the Question of the Liquidation of Land owned by Germans in Russia." Here Braun appears to have made explicit what virtually every scholar has assumed to be implicit in the two Russian editions. But as we have already suggested, these assumptions may well be in error.

In a perceptive unpublished piece on the Russian Mennonite dilemma of the late nineteenth, early twentieth century, A. A. Friesen, then Chairman of the *Studienkommission* sent out from Russia in 1920 to investigate emigration possibilities, argued that the vast majority of Russian Mennonites had been surprised by the anti-Mennonite, anti-colonist legislation in general and the land liquidation laws in particular. He wrote:

The government's anti-colonist measures during the war years – the liquidation laws, the various restrictions, and the despicable manner in which these measures were implemented – surprised, confused, and disconcerted the vast majority of our people. We perceived all these measures to be unjust. Feelings of indignation arose, and the injustices became grounds for a renewed desire to emigrate. For a few, however, these war measures became the occasion for reflecting more deeply upon their causes. Ultimately, these persons traced everything back to an extreme nationalistic, indeed Slavic nationalistic government policy. They discovered that the origins of the policy lay considerably further back in time and that the war with Germany only provided the excuse, not the cause, for the explosion of the inflammatory accusations in the narrower sense . . . .<sup>2</sup>

Friesen, too, had apparently been caught off guard by these measures. Yet Peter Braun, in his 1922 "Why Emigrate?" observed that Russian Mennonites had had "ample opportunity long before the war to come to the realization" that they no longer had a "fatherland" in Russia.<sup>3</sup> If the latter was indeed the case, why were the Russian Mennonites surprised by the government's war measures against them? And what about this larger "nationalistic" context discerned by Friesen's "few" who, in the post-war period, "reflected more deeply" on the underlying causes of the land liquidation laws?

Cornelius Bergmann, a Russian Mennonite doctoral student at the University of Leipzig caught in Switzerland when war broke out, attempted to answer the first question in early 1915 by arguing that his people had indeed been fully aware of the attacks against them in the press, but had chosen to ignore them, making "little effort to use the press to oppose these attacks." They had done the same thing in Prussia earlier. Bergmann posited two reasons for Mennonite passivity in the face of popular attacks: first, their addiction to monarchy which led them to depend upon the government for protection; second, since they constituted well-organized and compact settlements large enough



"to be self-sufficient and live in isolation," they felt secure. They had chosen to live in isolation, Bergmann insisted, "since time immemorial; since their emigration from Holland and Friesland" in the sixteenth century.<sup>4</sup> The implications of Bergmann's analysis was that Russian Mennonites had not initially seen a direct connection between the increasing nationalistic antipathy toward them voiced in the press, and the actions taken against them by the government during the war. Peter Braun's 1922 statement, however, suggests that they should have seen such a connection since the government's attitude toward them had begun to change long before the war; to such a degree, indeed, that they could easily have recognized the fact that they no longer had a "fatherland" in Russia.

That Mennonites did not at first make such a connection is clear; and the reason why they did not lay in the fact, as Bergmann asserted, that they had always been able to rely upon the Russian government to come to their defense in the past. B. B. Janz put it somewhat differently in his letter to the Queen of Holland on 22 December, 1922. While acknowledging that Mennonites had had their differences with the Russian government from time to time, he observed that they had always been able to resolve them by sending a delegation to negotiate directly with the St. Petersburg authorities. But between the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 and World War I Russia's gradual estrangement from Germany began to transform the Mennonite relationship to the government. According to P. N. Durnovo, the reactionary Minister of Internal Affairs in the Witte cabinet, this estrangement resulted in an "abrupt" shift in Russia's foreign policy.<sup>5</sup> Previously, he continued, Russia had been drawn to Germany by many ties: intermarriage of the Romanovs with German princesses; economic investments; scholarly and intellectual exchanges; trade and the like. He pleaded for a continuation of Russia's historic pro-German foreign policy with persuasive arguments, but it was too late.

Howard D. Mehlinger and John M. Thompson support Durnovo's argument in their 1972 book on Count Witte, as does Serge Sazonov, Russia's Foreign Minister at the time, though both see the shift as more gradual and disagree as to its causes. Mehlinger and Thompson link the change in Russia's German policy to its loan from France which was negotiated by Witte as President of the Council of Ministers after the Russo-Japanese War, a loan Russia needed in order to avoid an internal fiscal crisis. They argue:

Equally important to Russian history was the effect the international loan had on Russian foreign policy. With the lapse of the German-Russian treaty in 1890, the signing of the Franco-Russian alliance of 1894, and the growth of

French credits and investments in Russia, Russia had developed increasingly close ties with France. Yet in 1905 there were many in Russia, including Witte and probably the tsar, who would have preferred an alliance with Germany as well as who considered England Russia's chief enemy. This was certainly the spirit behind the ill-considered Bjorko Treaty. But, driven by his conviction of the importance of the loan to Russia, Witte took steps and offered guarantees which led Russia ultimately from the Bjorko romance with Germany to a hardened position as a member of the Triple Entente against the Triple Alliance. Thus, the effect of the loan was to estrange Russia from Germany, to shatter Witte's dreams of a grand continental alliance, to bind Russia even more tightly to France, and to help pave the way for the Anglo-Russian Entente . . . .<sup>6</sup>

Serge Sazonov noted the same shift in Russia's foreign policy but pinpointed the turning point more precisely. It came, he said, in the wake of the 1908 – 1909 Balkan Crisis between Austria and Russia during which Germany's support of Austria's Balkan policy was revealed. "From 1908 onwards," he observed in his memoirs, "there was not a doubt that Germany supported Austria's designs; the danger of a collision between Austria and Russia was consequently increased tenfold."<sup>7</sup> Should Austria and Russia come to blows over the Balkans, Sazonov had no doubt but that Germany would attack Russia. This conviction, rather than the more slowly evolving alliances between Russia and France, and then England, led to Russia's "abrupt" departure from its traditional foreign policy with strong ties to Germany. As it did so, the approximately five million "Germans" living in Russia came under governmental as well as popular suspicion, especially in Russia's Western borderlands which a hostile Germany would surely covet. Could Russia's ethnic German subjects in the region be trusted in such an event? Where would their loyalties then lie? To limit the effects of such an eventuality in the region as much as possible, the Russian government, as early as 1910 – that is virtually on the heels of the Balkan Crisis – introduced a bill in the Duma designed to prohibit German colonists from purchasing, renting, or inheriting land in the region.<sup>8</sup> Reminiscent of what St. Petersburg had done to the Poles in the same territory after the 1863 Polish uprising, the bill should have been a signal that the government was changing its attitude toward its "German" minorities; that the Mennonites' last and most important refuge in an increasingly hostile environment was turning its back on them; that they were, in effect, being abandoned by the government. But Mennonites refused to believe this; the 1910 bill had therefore to be considered an anomaly. Any other explanation would have been too painful to contemplate. For Mennonites refused to acknowledge that the Tsarist government might be turning against them. As a result, 1914 took them by surprise. Unlike the "shrewd steward" who foresaw his master's changing attitude towards

him and prepared for it, Mennonites not only failed to take any action, they willfully closed their eyes to any potential dangers.

Germany's declaration of war against Russia in 1914 and its immediate aftermath marked a watershed in the relations between Mennonites and the Russian government. As such, it afforded both sides the opportunity to reinterpret past encounters from a clarified, if not an entirely new vantage point. Whereas the government did so nearly immediately, perhaps indicating that it had been waiting for just such an opportunity, it took the Mennonites a little longer to become fully aware of what they thought was the government's changed attitude toward them. But the government had not suddenly become their enemy; the war merely provided it with a plausible excuse to associate the Mennonites' long-standing opposition to its Russification policies, their refusal to serve in the military or allow themselves to be assimilated into Russian society, with what it now asserted to be a long-standing Germany policy to infiltrate the country in order to prepare for an invasion in the case of war. St. Petersburg had not recognized this German policy until after the latter's enmity had become clear to her.

For Mennonites who claimed to abhor Prussian/German militarism, the implementation of the first land liquidation law was an eye opener. It marked the end of their innocence and the beginning of their overt distrust of the government; it also marked the transition from their thinly-veiled contempt for most things Russian to their outright hatred of them. They felt betrayed by a government they believed they had served in an exemplary manner since their immigration. And yet they were initially reluctant to blame the government itself, preferring instead to blame the war and Germany's alienation from Russia for their troubles. A few of them, however, perhaps taking St. Petersburg's own repeated charges against them during the war at face value, began to probe more deeply. According to Friesen, the conclusions they reached were not dissimilar to those already arrived at by the government; it was only in regard to their evaluation that they differed. The government for its part focused on the Mennonites' refusal to bear arms, on their isolation and unwillingness to assimilate, on their tenacious adherence to a *Deutschtum* that now, in light of Germany's growing enmity, had become problematic. The "few" Mennonites, on the other hand, as A. A. Friesen put it, blamed the government's "Slavic nationalist . . . policies," in other words its Russification policies. St. Petersburg saw these policies as good and necessary, indeed as the only way to transform a multi-ethnic, multi-religious empire into a national state; Mennonites, however, saw them from the vantage point of an ethno-religious minority that regarded Russification as destructive of its identity. They were to argue later that the government might not have acted as she did had

Mennonites not so tenaciously opposed its policies. But all Mennonites were agreed that only a perverse and malevolent government would cynically exploit a war to achieve its nationalistic goals through measures as drastic as land liquidation and expulsion. Under these circumstances, if war is the continuation of diplomacy by other means, then land liquidation and expulsion in Russia during the war was the continuation of Russification, of creating a national state, by other means. In this view the war merely provided the government with an excuse to change the methods by which it hoped to achieve its pre-war goals. How perceptive were these more thoughtful Mennonites?

In the 1780s, when Mennonites entered the country, Russia was still an empire containing diverse ethnic and religious peoples within her borders. The majority of these groups, brought into the empire primarily through conquest, lived on the empire's periphery.<sup>9</sup> Others, like the Mennonite and German colonists, had been invited into the realm. In the Western borderlands, for example, the conquered inhabitants had retained a wide variety of rights and privileges acquired in an earlier period. This was particularly true of the ruling elites, many of whom were either German Lutherans or Polish Catholics. Some regions, like "Congress Poland" after 1815, were even "granted a considerable degree of autonomy and a Constitutional Charter,"<sup>10</sup> while Finland, given the status of a Grand Duchy, "was governed separately from the rest of the empire."<sup>11</sup> But despite such privileges, steps had already been initiated under Catherine the Great to make "the borderlands conform to the laws and administrative norms of the Russian center."<sup>12</sup> At the same time, however, she still continued to offer special privileges to German and Mennonite colonists in order to entice them to settle in New Russia. Not until after the Polish insurrection of 1863, coming as it did in the midst of the Great Reforms introduced in the empire's core regions, however, did St. Petersburg begin to act more consistently with respect to both the Western borderlands and its internal minorities.

In the wake of the Polish uprising, Alexander II sent Count M. N. Muraviev into the region not only to restore order but also to establish Russian rule. The latter wrote in his memoirs:

I found the country [Poland] in a state of extreme anarchy . . . Thus we were faced with the task not only of crushing the open rebellion, but with the need to forbid criminal schemes and to do away with the very possibility of continuing the mutiny and, on the other hand, to promote to the greatest extent of our powers the unification of the countryside with the rest of Russia.<sup>13</sup>

As Theodore Weeks observes, this policy of trying to "strengthen Russian cultural, political, and economic power" in the Western Provinces,

remained the government's policy "until the end of the Russian Empire."<sup>14</sup>

To strengthen Russian authority in the areas under Polish influence after 1863, for example, the government confiscated Polish estates and limited Poles from purchasing land in the Western provinces. An unintended consequence of this policy was, as Weeks himself observes, to encourage German colonists to settle in the region.<sup>15</sup> But the Russian government did more. Since Poles were Catholics, and Catholic priests, implicated in the revolt, were seen as the carriers of "polonization," Polish monasteries were closed, priests exiled, and educational institutions russified. Poles were also removed from most government posts in the region.<sup>16</sup>

Whereas Russification, then, appears to have owed its inception to the Polish insurrection of 1863, by 1880 it had become St. Petersburg's general policy vis-à-vis its minority populations throughout the realm. Aided and abetted by a rising tide of national sentiment throughout Europe in the mid to late nineteenth century, Russification became part of the Russian government's attempt to transform a multi-ethnic, multi-religious empire into a more unified national state. As we have argued elsewhere, the introduction of universal conscription in 1873 must be seen as an integral part of this program. But, for a variety of reasons – not least of all because of the government's own inconsistent application of these policies – Russification was at best a qualified success.<sup>17</sup> In certain areas, it was even a dismal failure because it reduced non-ethnic Russian subjects to the status of ethnic or confessional second class subjects. In doing so, it inadvertently drew attention to their "otherness" and awakened their slumbering ethnic identities, inspiring many minority groups to oppose the government's policies while beginning to cultivate, and subsequently to treasure, their own identity, an identity the Russian government was seeking to submerge or even to eradicate.<sup>18</sup> Peter Braun makes the point with regard to the Mennonite reaction to the government's Russification policies:

... The Russification policies," he states, "did not lead to the desired result; rather, the opposite was achieved. It has ever been thus in human history: 'The more pressure they exerted on the people, the more the opposition grew.' The same thing happened here. Every force produces a counter-force; this is only natural. Patriotism, love of country and other similar noble sentiments simply cannot be mandated or coerced.

By means of the government's policy, friends became enemies. That is what happened to the School Board. For example, anyone who knows Elder Goerz from this and later times, where he repeatedly defended, and had to defend, the preservation of our religious interests and our [German] mother tongue, might think that this man had always been an inveterate, outspoken nationalist. And yet precisely this same Elder Goerz had been an enthusiastic promoter of Russian language education in the 70s and 80s. He was one of the first to introduce Russ-

ian language instruction at a time when only a few thought about it, thereby creating a favorable climate for its acceptance. Indeed, his accomplishments in this regard were acknowledged. Now, however, a new era had dawned, an era that presented him with new challenges that drove him in another direction. A similar transformation took place in men like W. Neufeld, K. Unruh and others.<sup>19</sup>

Led by such men, Russian Mennonites mounted a determined defense of their German educational system, and through it of their ethnic and religious identity. As Peter Braun's brother Heinrich put it: "The battle with the [Russian] Ministry of Education was intense and difficult . . . The School Board led the fight, but behind it stood the village congregations with their leaders. Thus, fighting shoulder to shoulder, we were able to retain the field."<sup>20</sup> This conflict with the Ministry of Education even recreated a unity in the larger Mennonite community that had been ruptured, some thought irreparably, in 1860.<sup>21</sup>

As Peter Braun suggests, the period of intense struggle with the government over its Russification school policies came during the 1880s and into the 1890s, at the end of which (1899-1902) the seemingly distant Boer War was fought. Having been made aware of their ethnic "otherness" by the government's attempt to assimilate them into Russian society, Mennonites began to confront the question of their own ethnicity at the very time tensions between the Boers and the English in South Africa began to grow with the discovery of gold at Witwatersrand in 1886. By 1895 war seemed imminent, and by 1899 it had broken out. It is this war that appears to have reminded the Russian Mennonites of their Dutch ethnicity, for they immediately identified with the Boers. As Peter Braun put it in his *Kto takie Mennonity*:

It should not be assumed that the Russian Mennonites have only now [1914] been reminded of their Dutch origin. It is true that they never paid much attention to it, nor was there any need to do so; but this awareness has always been there and surfaced from time to time. For example, during the Boer War in South Africa (1899-1902), Mennonites often spoke of their Dutch origin and their kinship with the Boers. At times they even liked to call themselves 'Boers' (in the vernacular, 'Buren' means 'Bauer' or 'farmer'), and they followed the course of military affairs in South Africa with the greatest of interest.

Perhaps it was the two events of Russification and the Boer War, coming together as the opposite sides of the same coin, which on the one hand strengthened the Mennonites' awareness of their "otherness" to the surrounding population, and on the other, filled this "otherness" with an awakened slumbering consciousness of their Dutch ethnicity.

Censorship, too, played a role in the government's Russification policy. Aside from limiting Russian language publications to those favorable to the regime, and religious publications to those issued by the Orthodox

Church, it also limited foreign language publications generally. Russian Mennonites, for example, until 1905 had no indigenous presses which might have helped them to shape a Mennonite identity. But the 1905 October Manifesto undermined the three pillars of the government's policy – Serge Uvarov's "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality"<sup>22</sup> – with its promulgation of freedom of religion and the press and led, as Eric Lohr has observed, to an outburst of minority as well as Russian nationalist publications, many in languages other than Russian. Mennonites, too, immediately after 1905, established two major German language periodicals, the *Friedensstimme* and *Der Botschafter*, which were used to give voice to Mennonite concerns and help shape their identity.

By 1905, therefore, Mennonites had weathered the Russification onslaught. They had in many ways successfully resisted the government's policies, even universal conscription which was perhaps the centerpiece of its Russification policies, and, in their opposition, had begun to discover their own identity. David H. Epp's 1897 recovery of Ludwig Keller's interpretation of Anabaptism, the educational explosion beginning in the late nineteenth century, and their historical awakening (or awakening to history in general and Mennonite history in particular) were all part of a growing awareness of their Dutch ethnicity and Mennonite religious identity that was, in many ways, the byproduct of St. Petersburg's failed Russification policies. Underneath the surface of these apparent successes, however, there lurked an unconscious latent conflict. Mennonites had been reminded, during the Boer War, of their ancient Dutch heritage; yet in the battle with the Ministry of Education they had asserted their cultural and linguistic *Deutschtum*. When that *Deutschtum* came under pervasive attack after 1910, and especially during the war years, the Russian Mennonites' ethnic schizophrenia began to surface.

The outbreak of the war in July, 1914 fired the flames of a Russian nationalism that had become unfettered by the removal of censorship in the 1905 October Manifesto. Whereas the Poles and their Catholic religion had been the chief object of Russian nationalist suspicions after 1863, the 1909 Balkan Crisis refocused these suspicions on Germany which, as the staunch ally of the Austro-Hungarian Empire competing with Russia for hegemony in the Balkans, appeared to be turning against her. Kaiser Wilhelm's subsequent attempt to redirect Russia's attention away from the Balkans and her Western borderlands to the Far East, made to Serge Sazonov during a visit between the two emperors at Baltic Port in June of 1912, only confirmed Russia's apprehensions about Germany's policies. It also convinced Sazonov, as he wrote in his memoirs, that Germany wished to "turn Russia back to a policy which would entangle her once more in a prolonged difficult struggle in the

Far East, a struggle called for by no real Russian interests, and would consequently deprive her, for a long time, of all influence in Europe."<sup>23</sup>

Russia's growing suspicion of her German subjects after 1910 was complemented by that of an increasing number of Orthodox churchmen who, already in the second half of the nineteenth century, had begun to accuse German colonists of infiltrating Russia and attempting to subvert her domestically through such religious movements as *Stundism*. As Sergei Zhuk has argued, the latter saw the colonists not only as undermining the Orthodox Church by introducing a cancerous sect into her midst, but also as undermining the State by transforming these sectarian Russians into Germans. Together with the creation of the Russian/Ukrainian Baptist Church and the emergence of the Pashkovite movement in St. Petersburg, these movements, as we have described them in the foregoing chapter, appeared to confirm the Orthodox Church's fears that such "Germanizing" Protestant heresies, many of which had been "imported" from the West by way of the Mennonite and Lutheran colonists, were undermining Russia internally; the more so since many Russians posited a direct connection between religion and ethnicity. In the wake of the Mennonite (and German colonist) opposition to Russification – the obverse to its introduction of *Stundism* into the country – and the transformation of Russo-German relations, an intense Germanophobia arose in the country at the outbreak of the Great War. As Robert W. Coonrod has argued, this Germanophobia also had economic components to it and was "new to Russia as a major problem." The admiration for Germans in pre-war Russia therefore quickly turned to disillusionment "which at times reached the proportions of hysteria." Coonrod goes on to say:

... In the twenty-five years preceding the war, Russia had committed herself to a program of industrialization. Much German capital and advice had been used in the process. Consequently, when the war broke out, there was an intense fear that Russia had been duped into allowing Germany to create a situation by which Germany would be able to stab Russia in the back. It was the fear of 'fifth columns' and 'subversive activities,' to use the terms of a later period. Thus, Russia found herself fighting for her life against an enemy which many felt was not totally visible. As a result, the Government sometimes lost all reason in its approach to the problem. Its actions could be compared to a snake in the spring of the year, which, in order to defend itself, will strike blindly at anything that moves.<sup>24</sup>

What caught Russian Mennonites off guard at the outset of the war, therefore, was St. Petersburg's "abrupt" shift in foreign policy away from Germany. They had neither foreseen nor expected such a shift and were consequently unprepared for the accompanying internal reactions. But



given their long-standing addiction to autocratic rule and their conviction that the Tsar was fundamentally favorably inclined toward them, what aroused their indignation was the realization that their government intended to exploit its alienation from Germany in a most cynical manner to expropriate their lands on the pretense of their *potential* disloyalty. Only when this happened did some of the more thoughtful amongst them begin to recall the signs of Tsarist unhappiness with the Mennonite responses to Russification, especially the many instances in which they had successfully resisted the government's initiatives in this regard. Heretofore Mennonites had consciously or unconsciously either closed their eyes to this displeasure, or, as B. B. Janz put it in his December, 1922 letter to the Queen of Holland, thought they had successfully negotiated their differences through their many delegations sent to the capital city. The coming of the war taught them otherwise; arbitrary rulers, like elephants, did indeed have long memories.

As we argued in the first chapter, the Mennonite addiction to autocratic rule was a long-standing one and need not be revisited here. But we must address the question of Mennonite isolation and failure to assimilate,<sup>25</sup> charges that were brought against them by Russian nationalists, eventually also by the government itself. Even Friesen pointed to this factor as central to the Russian Mennonite dilemma. We too shall therefore make it the context into which we place our discussion of the liquidation laws passed by the Russian government against its German and Mennonite minorities on 2 February and 13 December, 1915.<sup>26</sup>

Mennonites did not see the isolation of their colonies in Russia as problematic until after World War I. Even then, as Friesen observed, only those did so who reflected more profoundly upon the difficulties they had encountered during the war. The vast majority of the Mennonites continued to regard their closed communities in Russia as the "Mennonite ideal." It was an ideal that had allowed them, as Benjamin Unruh wrote as late as 1937, to develop a church community that was "enabled to create, along with its religious life, a cultural community which put into practice many of the ideas that had germinated in the minds of early leaders like Conrad Grebel."<sup>27</sup> Such a community, Unruh contended, had been unique in the annals of Mennonite history. It was a community Russian Mennonites sought to re-create in the lands to which they hoped to emigrate, and which they longed for when they landed in countries where this was not possible. Thus B. B. Janz, the leader of the Russian wing of the emigration movement, wrote, as early as 1922, referring to countries under consideration as destinations:

... A portion of our people (I don't know how large) will find the Canadian orientation acceptable. On the other hand, many will be depressed by it

because it will mean that an entire old way of life will crumble and a new one will have to be built up, that the re-creation of the Mennonite ideal – to be able to establish a large, compact settlement where we can cultivate our unique characteristics [Eigenart], our culture, language, etc. – must evaporate like mist in the morning sun. We all participated with verve and enthusiasm in the discussion of this ideal as Unruh expressed it in his reports. Can it now not be implemented? . . . If not, I will have to inform our congregations definitively with regard to this Mennonite ideal, and I cannot do it . . . If, for the salvation of our congregations, our ideal can be realized, that is what we would prefer . . .<sup>28</sup>

Was this “Mennonite ideal” the creation of the Russian government’s colonizing policy at the time? In other words, was it intentional or did the immigrating Mennonites desire such settlements? Was it perhaps some combination of the two? The question is important because of the accusations later brought against the Mennonites in this regard by nationalists and eventually also by the government itself. If the Mennonites’ closed communities were the result of government policy, that policy was not clearly articulated in the documents relating to the immigration. Neither, for that matter, was any Mennonite predilection however. It is true that in Catherine’s 1763 *Manifesto* there is talk of settling immigrants in “special colonies,” but in nearly the same breath it also speaks of settling them on “open land” as well as in the cities. Those who should choose to “settle in separate colonies and smaller localities” were to be granted the right “to create their own internal governing organs in accordance with their desires, with the proviso that the heads of our bureaucracies play no role in their internal affairs.” While this was allowed, it was not mandated. Indeed, immigrants were to be allowed to move into the cities and there establish industrial enterprises if they so chose. As incentives to immigrate, all future colonists were promised religious freedom, exemption from military service, and exemption from certain taxes and local obligations for a given number of years.<sup>29</sup> In other words, they were granted rights and privileges similar if not identical to the other minority groups that were being incorporated into the peripheral regions of the empire.

In the specific requests submitted to Prince Potemkin on 5 July, 1787 by the Prussian Mennonites desiring to enter Russia, nothing is said about a Mennonite preference for settlement in closed communities. Nevertheless, the landholding system under which Mennonites held the land granted them by the government tended to aid and abet their isolation. Modeled on the system under which State peasants held their land, Article 670 of the colonial law stated: “All the lands granted the colonists for settlement are to be theirs for their use forever; the lands are not however to be held as private property, but are to be the property of the village (or *mir*).” And Article 671 prescribed that “no one

may sell the least part of his property without the consent of the authorities set over them, so that no part of these lands may fall into the hands of alien persons."<sup>30</sup> Their landholding system, and with it their closed communities, was therefore imposed upon the Mennonites by the Russian government. But whether this was done consciously for specific reasons or simply because such procedures were already in place for State peasantry and could also be applied to the immigrating colonists has remained unclear.

What these Mennonites did request specifically was the right to establish "factories and related businesses in the villages or cities of Eka-terinoslav (Dnepropetrovsk) governorship or region of Taurida, and to join a trade or craft association, and that these entrepreneurs and artisans be allowed to sell their products freely and without any dues or obligations in the villages or cities."<sup>31</sup> Aside from the above economic rights, they also specifically requested "the unfettered exercise of their religion in accordance with their church ordinances and traditions," exemption from military service for themselves and their descendants "forever," and the right not to have to swear an oath in a court of law.<sup>32</sup> One would think that if closed communities had been of overriding concern to the Mennonites at the time, they would have done what they did with respect to their economic and religious concerns: spell them out very specifically in their request. They did not do so, however. It is possible, therefore, that the Russian Mennonite predilection for isolated, self-sufficient, closed communities may only have crystallized later, after they had begun to reflect upon the government's policy to settle them in such communities. For recent scholarship has found that Mennonites had not settled in closed communities in Prussia<sup>33</sup> and therefore probably did not bring such a preference along with them. Perhaps, too, it was simply more natural to settle in such communities in Russia than in Prussia because of the language differences between the Mennonites and their surrounding Russian-speaking communities. But then, as both Peter Braun and Cornelius Bergmann noted, Russian Mennonites not only isolated themselves from the native population in Russia, they also isolated themselves from their German Catholic and Lutheran colonist counterparts.<sup>34</sup>

In his "Betrachtungen," A. A. Friesen suggested the following reasons for the closed Mennonite Settlements in Russia:

The first settlers encountered wild and uncultivated prairies in South Russia. Economically they were confronted with pioneering work. Their culture and way of life was so much higher than that of the natives – the Nogai, e.g. – that there could be no thought of any assimilation with them or even of any ordered relationship with them. The natives were simply forced out, more than likely as the result of a conscious government policy.

The government probably regarded the first settlers as the carriers of a [higher] culture. She probably did not desire that these elements [the new settlers] disappear in the nomadic culture of the Nogai, among others; rather, she made every effort to support and preserve [the identity] of the German colonists. These factors explain the characteristics of the Russian government's colonization policies until the time of the extreme nationalistic policies pursued in the 1880s, such policies as: the maintenance of the German language in the schools and official communication, the prohibition against strangers settling in German colonies, etc. The first Russians to arrive in the South were mostly marginalized elements, criminals and banished persons, etc. A close association with such elements was desired neither by the colonists nor by the government. The general antipathy toward everything non-Mennonite, or at least non-colonist, that arose as a consequence was later gradually and unconsciously extended to the better classes of Russians that came into the region little by little.<sup>35</sup>

No doubt there is much to be said for Friesen's analysis, but Benjamin Unruh's argument – made with a touch of Nazi racial theory in his 1943 manuscript, *Die Auswanderung* – must be added to it. For whereas the Russian government's secular colonizing policy, if we can call it that, may have changed in the 1880s under the pressure of pan Slavic nationalism, its religious policy as enunciated by Pobedonostsev did not. It was this religious policy Unruh pointed to in the above manuscript, saying:

The purity of the blood of the *volksdeutsche* settlers was largely assured by means of the settlement policy of the Mennonites' chosen homeland, principally through the isolation of their colonies, which had as its purpose in the first instance to protect the Russian Orthodox population from outside religious influences. This was the main reason for this government policy.<sup>36</sup>

As we saw in the last chapter, this was an ancient religious policy in Russia that went back to before the Protestant Reformation, a policy that was later also applied to Russia's sectarian communities. It was a religious policy pursued by Pobedonostsev from 1880 to 1905 and continued by the ministers of the Department of Internal Affairs right up to the Great War. But precisely at the point in time when Pobedonostsev came to power and reaffirmed this religious policy, the government, as Friesen noted, changed its secular policy. It sought, as Pavlov told the *KfK* delegates to St. Petersburg in March of 1910, to end the Mennonites' isolation once and for all; that is, to integrate or assimilate them into Russian society. Whereas from a secular perspective this meant learning the Russian language, giving up their privileges, their special institutions and their isolation, from a religious perspective it meant converting to Orthodoxy.<sup>37</sup> But even if they did the latter, something Mennonites had absolutely no intention of doing, there was still the

fact that they were "Germans." And, according to Pobedonostsev, being German was associated with being Catholic, Lutheran or, perhaps, even Baptist; it could not be associated with Orthodoxy. Only a Russian could be truly Orthodox, and only an Orthodox could be a true Russian. Even if "German" Mennonites could become Orthodox Russians, would they not, in doing so, have to become apostates to their faith and traitors to their race, something Pobedonostsev and the Russian authorities refused to countenance in the case of their fellow countrymen? Mennonites might therefore be able to learn the Russian language and perhaps even become cultural Russians, but they could never become true Russians. Linguistic and cultural integration into Russian society would only give Mennonites greater access to Russian Orthodox Church members and assist them in proselytizing in their midst, in the process turning them into Germans if they converted to Protestantism. As we have seen, this was the last thing Russian authorities, especially in the church, wanted.

Mennonites in Russia at the turn of the century were therefore caught in a second dilemma, but this one was of the government's own making. It was a dilemma from which there was no escape as long as the government refused to change its religious policy and the assumptions upon which it rested. Such a changed religious policy appeared to have been implemented by the 17 April, 1905 Manifesto on religious toleration. But as we have seen, the manifesto turned out to be a smoke screen. In the final analysis, the governor's words to the Pashkovites were more telling than the manifesto: "Imperial edicts [manifestos]," he said, "are – how shall I express it – like poetry; real life, however, is contained in the circulars," circulars that contradicted and therefore undermined the "poetry" of the manifesto. The very document that appeared to have resolved the dilemma for the Mennonites, in actual fact, therefore, made matters considerably worse because of the uncertainty created by the gap between the government's public pronouncements and its secret directives.

Whatever the motives behind the government's policies, the fact that the Mennonites were settled in closed colonies was to take on added significance during the war years precisely because, at the war's outset, the government accused the Mennonites of consciously isolating themselves from their Russian neighbors, doing so because they had long been party to Germany's intention to conquer the country. It then used this argument as one reason to justify liquidating their lands.

Why had the Russian government brought Mennonites into the country in the first place if this is what they eventually came to think of them? As far as I can tell, only Adolf Ehrt among non-Russian historians has attempted to determine the reasons for their entry.<sup>38</sup> He argues

that colonists were invited into the country because of the Russian government's mercantilist economic policies, policies that encouraged economic growth by granting state monopolies, that subsidized certain preferred industries, and that brought experts in a particular field into the country in order to build up a desired industry. In Russia's case, Catherine sought to bring in German farmers not only to settle the land recently conquered from the Turks, but also to set an example of what could be achieved agriculturally.<sup>39</sup> Though Catherine's *Manifesto* did not make the point directly, Paul's great *Privilegium* did say:

In order to authenticate our most gracious grant in response to the petition received by us from the Mennonites settled in the New Russian provinces, *who according to the testimony of their supervisors and because of their outstanding industry and their commendable way of life, can serve as an example to others settled there, and who, because of this, have become deserving of our special attention*, we have, in this charter of privileges granted to them, not only affirmed all the rights and privileges previously agreed to, but have also, *in order to encourage their thrift and concern for agriculture still more* [my emphasis], graciously granted them additional rights in the following articles.<sup>40</sup>

The above, especially the italicized sections, is couched very much in mercantilist language, the language of state-sponsored incentives for clearly spelled out economic goals. At the same time, however, the fact that Mennonite farmers *could* serve as examples to indigenous peasants appears not to have been an original condition of their entry into the country (as Russian nationalists later argued) but rather the result of the "testimony of their supervisors" who had observed their "outstanding industry and commendable way of life."<sup>41</sup> While it is therefore true, as Terry Martin writes, that "The colonists, then, conformed to the normal pattern of foreigners in Russia, being both isolated from the Russian population and given a separate and privileged social order,"<sup>42</sup> this does not yet explain the reasons for the government's invitation. But if we see its policy as the natural expression of a mercantilist ideology in a period of European history during the early stages of the formation of centralized nation states, and that the policy had to change as nations changed and modified, or even abandoned, mercantilist ways, we can better understand the dynamics of the Mennonite/Russian government conflict during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Governments pursuing mercantilist economic policies tended to be very paternalistic with regard to the industries they sought to develop. And the Russian government did indeed act in such a manner with respect to the Mennonite colonies, establishing a "Guardian Committee" in 1800 – the very year of Paul's great *Privilegium* – to oversee their progress.<sup>43</sup> This committee protected and promoted the Mennonite

colonies at every turn. But whereas most European countries sought to build up native industries by promoting local entrepreneurs, the Russian government had long recruited intellectuals, professionals, and now farmers predominantly from Germany, a country with which the Romanov dynasty had had close ties since the time of Peter the Great. These German/Mennonite farmers were freedmen; many of the surrounding Russian and Ukrainian peasants, however, were serfs. Later, Russian nationalists argued that had Catherine granted these conditions to a freed local population instead of bringing such foreign freedmen into the country and bestowing special privileges upon them, the former would have been at least as successful as the foreigners. Elisiev, as Terry Martin has written, therefore

... vilified Catherine's decision to settle foreign colonists in New Russia at enormous expense to the government, while she simultaneously completed the enserfment of the Ukrainian peasantry. Had she instead settled New Russia with Ukrainian peasants, and given them "only one third of those privileges, which were given to the Mennonites, they would now in their economy represent the most flourishing part of the empire."<sup>44</sup>

By the 1860s the Russian government had abandoned its earlier mercantilist policies and the mercantilist context of the Mennonite entry into the empire was therefore either forgotten or consciously ignored. Now, because of growing Russian nationalism, Mennonites appeared to their Russian hosts more and more only as isolated, Germanic, privileged, and exempt from military service. But what imperiled them during the war was the fact that, beginning in the mid nineteenth century, this appearance came to be combined with a new government policy, a policy intended to create a uniform, pan Slavic Russia. On the one hand, this new policy led to the emancipation of the Russian peasantry in 1861 and, on the other, to the attempt in 1873 to take away the most prized of all Russian Mennonite privileges, that of exemption from military service. As we have seen, other measures followed, all geared to integrating the German/Mennonite colonists into Russian society. But both the German and Mennonite colonists resisted these policies. At the same time, as Cornelius Bergmann pointed out, the economic well-being of the Russian peasantry was not improved by emancipation. Yet that very emancipation forced many noble landowners, who now had to pay for peasant labor on their estates and therefore suddenly found them unprofitable, to sell all or part of their estates, very often at bargain prices.<sup>45</sup> This coincided almost precisely with the beginning of the Mennonite land hunger of the 1860s and the establishment of "daughter colonies." "Mother colonies" bought up large parcels of land for their surplus populations, while wealthy Mennonites began purchasing

individual estates (khutors) outside the colonies. According to Bergmann, Mennonites were the first to take advantage of this situation, picking up the best of the available land. And they continued to do so over time, once more in an accelerated fashion immediately after the 1905 revolution.<sup>46</sup> As a consequence, by the time of World War I, Mennonites, together with their Catholic and Lutheran German counterparts, owned a disproportionately large percentage of the best agricultural land in the regions in which they lived.

In his "Betrachtungen," A. A. Friesen noted this change in governmental policy, beginning in the 1860s; its goal, he argued, had been to undo the privileged status of the Mennonites and integrate them into Russian society. Mennonites were to learn the Russian language, serve in the military, give up control of their schools, and generally become subject, like everyone else, to the laws of the land. But while this transition was (or was not, as the case may be) underway, Russia's relationship with Germany began to change. And this change was at least partially responsible for the transformation of the government's attitude toward its Mennonite and German minorities. Until unification under Bismarck in the 1860s, he argued, a splintered Germany posed little threat to Russia. Indeed, Germans were to be found in important positions at court, in the academies, and in public service. But after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 Germany began to take on a different face for Russians, especially for ardent nationalists.<sup>47</sup> And the German colonists who had until then been regarded, at least in governmental circles, as the carriers of a higher, Western culture to Russia began to be seen as the advance column of German imperialist eastward expansion: of Germany's ancient "Drang nach dem Osten."<sup>48</sup> As relations between the two countries deteriorated, the attacks on Germans and Mennonites inside Russia intensified and the government's internal policy became increasingly anti-German. Such a policy made it more acceptable for Russian subjects to give vent to their own anti-German, anti-colonist feelings. And so it had come that, at the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese War, the surrounding population in many places had begun to take advantage of unsettled conditions to vent its anger not only against the government, but also against the German/Mennonite colonists. Buildings were burned down, crops destroyed and goods plundered, landowners intimidated by mobs incited to violence.<sup>49</sup> Then, in 1910, a government bill was introduced in the Duma "designed to forbid German colonists from purchasing, renting or inheriting land in the three western provinces of Kiev, Podolia, and Volynia."<sup>50</sup> Initially supported by the Octobrist party in the Duma, influential German opposition was still able to persuade the party to withdraw its approval. If the government could attempt to implement such measures in peacetime, what



might it do in wartime – especially in a war with Germany?

With the outbreak of that war, Russian Mennonites being considered (and considering themselves) Germans, were "suddenly recast by the regime and society as dangerous internal enemies," as Eric Lohr observes.<sup>51</sup> Initially, the Russian government only moved against "enemy aliens," but the attack, both popular and official, "quickly expanded well beyond enemy subjects to affect large numbers of naturalized immigrants and Russian citizens whose loyalty was questioned because of their ethnicity, religion, or former citizenship."<sup>52</sup> On 22 September enemy subjects were prohibited from acquiring property; on 5 October the German language was proscribed and everyone instantly russified; German language periodicals were banned, with *Raduga* nearly going under; and by 21 October Mennonites possessed a copy of a draft law proposing the liquidation of all land held by Germans in the Western border provinces. If Russification had failed to assimilate the ethnic minorities prior to 1905, the war was apparently going to be used to nationalize, through liquidation and expulsion, not only the land but also the industrial enterprises held by ethnic minorities: Germans being by far one of the largest of the latter.<sup>53</sup>

In a lecture entitled, "The Suffering of the Germanic Colonists in Russia in the War Years 1914 - 1917,"<sup>54</sup> H. J. Braun stated that he believed the government's land liquidation policies during the war had simply been an extension of its earlier Russification program, a program it had been forced to give up in 1905. The first four subheadings of his talk were: "1) The Attempts on the Part of the Ministry of Education to Russify Us; 2) The Attack on Us in the Leading Newspapers because of our Land Acquisitions; 3) The Casting of Suspicion upon Us at the Onset of War in 1914; 4) The First Version of the Land Liquidation Law and its Supplements." To Braun and Friesen's more thoughtful Mennonites, therefore, the Russian government appeared to have used the war to achieve its pre-war Russification goals, only by other, much more radical, means. Because Mennonites had refused to be russified, their lands would be nationalized and they themselves driven from hearth and home. Eric Lohr would appear to agree with this argument, observing in the introduction to his study that whereas "Russification was among the most important ways the old regime began to act like a nationalizing state prior to 1914," during the war the proponents of nationalism "aimed to free Russians and other core nationalities from these forms of [German] dominance, and lobbied for strong wartime measures to remake the empire along more national, more Russian lines, either by physically removing dominant minorities or at least temporarily removing their economic and social power over national groups."<sup>55</sup>



## “All this, with one Stroke of the Pen, will belong to us”

*All this, with one stroke of the pen, will now belong to us. Riches worth billions will fall to us through decrees being prepared at the highest levels; for these Germans will be driven from their lands, and then we will settle our returning, victorious veterans on them . . . Don't you know that every German in Russia is a spy, and that these people received funds from the German government to establish their colonies, that they have their own bank in Berlin to extend credit to them, that every German village [in Russia] is a strategic point for Kaiser Wilhelm, that they possess a dual citizenship making them subjects in Russia and also Germany? It is only right that we dispossess these spies of their homes and property.*

– High ranking official in the Ministry of Agriculture to Johannes Schleuning early in the war.

On 20 July, 1914 Russia declared war on Germany. Only two days later, the Molotschna Mennonite church leadership, together with the two volost elders, the head of the Forestry Service Committee and several others, met as a body to address what was clearly regarded as a disastrous turn of events for Russian Mennonites.<sup>1</sup> After choosing a moderator and several secretaries, of which Peter Braun was one, the government's declaration of war was read. Then the question, how they (the Molotschna Mennonites) could best fulfill their obligation to the “fatherland” under the new circumstances, was debated. That debate led to a unanimous decision to issue a call to all young Mennonite men to volunteer for service in the medical corps; the committee followed this up with another call to the volost elders of Molotschna and Gnadenfeld to raise the requisite funds to support such service. The group then added bishops H. Peters, Liebenau, and G. Nickel, Grossweide, to its membership and recommended that the district immediately make arrangements to erect temporary hospitals for wounded soldiers. It also recommended that the August Mennonite General Conference be postponed, and that those young men serving in the Forestry camps, who had petitioned to be transferred to the medical corps, be allowed to do so. The transcript of the proceedings was to be sent to the various churches in the district so that it could be read from the pulpits the following Sunday. Time was clearly of the essence, and the implicit message from the Molotschna *Kirchenkonvent* and the

volost leadership to the various *Bruderschaften* was that they should immediately approve the recommendations. The following individuals were present at the meeting: G. Plett, H. Unruh, Heinr. Koop, G. Epp, D. Nickel, Peter Epp, H. Guenther, Jak. Wiens, B. Epp, **H. J. Braun**, Heinrich Peters, and Benjamin Retzlaff; the volost elders, Dietrich Dueck and Jacob Duerksen; the elected chairman, D. Klassen; and secretary, **Peter Braun**.<sup>2</sup>

Hardly had this meeting, chaired by David J. Klassen, President of the Forestry Committee, ended than Klassen received a telegram from St. Petersburg calling him to the capitol to discuss the Mennonite contribution to the war effort with the Council of Ministers. Not wishing to shoulder the responsibility for any decisions reached at such a meeting alone, Klassen took some "influential and competent men with him."<sup>3</sup> No doubt, these "influential and competent men" had already been involved in similar discussions at the 22 July meeting in Halbstadt. According to Lawrence Klippenstein, Klassen returned "at the beginning of August" with the information that all Mennonite reservists up to the age of 45, including teachers, would be obligated to serve along with those normally called on to do so.

The Molotschna Mennonites were not alone in taking such action. Heinrich Epp, director of Chortitza's *Lehrer Seminar*, writing in 1918, told a very similar story about the action taken by the Old Colony almost immediately after the declaration of war. At a *Bruderschaft* meeting of the Chortitza church (the precise date is not given as it was in the case of Molotschna) it was unanimously decided to send a telegram to the Tsar expressing Mennonite loyalty [Ergebenheits-telegram], saying that

... The Chortitza Mennonites wished to place their entire wealth at the disposal of the fatherland and that they were prepared to do everything to help heal the wounds of war. For this purpose the Chortitza Mennonites would pay all expenses for a 200 bed hospital in Ekaterinoslav and another 100 bed hospital in Chortitza. At a second *Bruderschaft* meeting, when the land liquidation laws were already a threat, it was decided that all our young men, who had been legally freed from the forestry service, should be offered to the military officials for service in the medical corps. A large number of young Mennonites had already volunteered for medical service; some had even volunteered for regular military service.<sup>4</sup>

No sooner had the war broken out than articles on the Mennonites began to appear in the Russian press noting the extent to which their young men were volunteering for service in the medical corps.<sup>5</sup> On 22 September, 1914, for example, an article appeared in the semi-official *Press Review*<sup>6</sup> referring to Mennonites as German sectarians who

opposed war. Yet, while calling them honest and sober, it nonetheless warned that they would take advantage of their role as medics to proselytize wounded Russian soldiers, whom they considered "slaves to sin." By twisting biblical passages, Mennonite medics might easily persuade such a soldier that war was wrong.<sup>7</sup> Another article talked about how much land Mennonites owned, where they came from, and that they were sectarians: as such very organized and single-minded. It spoke of Mennonites separating themselves from the poorer local Russian population while at the same time recruiting it as farm labor. They owned the best land and manufactured their own implements, which Russians themselves were forced to buy. It concluded by asserting that Mennonite and German colonies should either be restricted or even totally abolished.<sup>8</sup> Still another pointed out that Mennonites had emigrated from Germany to Russia because of persecution for refusing to bear arms.<sup>9</sup> Was the Russian government seeking to undermine the Mennonite position while at the same time preparing the public for its land liquidation legislation by releasing such articles to the public press?

Toward the end of September an article appeared in *Russkoye Slovo* dealing with one of the medical train units. Apparently, most of the men in the unit were Mennonites. The writer, I. Zhilkin, described the Mennonites as "Dutchmen" who had been invited to Russia by Catherine the Great and granted special privileges. He quoted the supervisor of the unit as expressing surprise at the large number of Mennonites who had volunteered for medical service. Clearly, they had done so out of a "great passionate feeling" for Mother Russia. The writer had also obviously been told that the Mennonites' colloquial language was Dutch, whereas their literary and religious language was German.<sup>10</sup> Not only did these young Mennonite volunteers know the "Dutch argument," they appear also to have been able propagandists for their own cause.

On 4 October, 1914, just a few days before the introduction of the land liquidation law in the Duma, an article entitled "Forest People" discussing the German colonies appeared in the *Press Review*. Mennonites, the author said, refused to call themselves German. When asked his nationality, one of them had told the writer that they were Mennonites who had come from Holland under Catherine the Great. Their colloquial language, he asserted, was not German but the Dutch dialect "Plattdeutsch." They therefore rejected any connection to Germany. All very well, the author noted, since no one in Russia wanted to be a German at the moment.<sup>11</sup>

From where or from whom did these Mennonite volunteers derive the "Dutch argument" virtually at the outset of the war, well before word of the introduction of the land liquidation law in the Duma had reached them? Had they been briefed on the "theory" before they volunteered?

In a recent article in the *Mennonite Historian*, James Urry drew attention to the Russian Mennonite interest in the South African Boer struggle for independence against Great Britain in the late nineteenth century. This interest manifested itself in a number of ways: in keeping up with news reports on the events, especially in the *Odessaer Zeitung*; in naming, at about this time, a number of new Mennonite villages "Pretoria"; by following the events in the regular reports that appeared in Abraham Kroeker's *Familienkalender*, and the detailed account in his cousin, Jacob Kroeker's, *Kalender*. After all, these Boers were "fellow Dutchmen" who had also left the Netherlands in search of religious freedom. Mennonite sympathy was therefore totally on the side of the Boers with whom they felt both a spiritual and racial kinship. It was a connection even P. M. Friesen alluded to in his history when he wrote: "A Mennonite is a taciturn, reserved 'Boer' with the exception of the fact that he does not fire guns or cannons; Boers and Mennonites also have the same ancestry, predominantly Dutch." Urry goes on to assert that the "linking of Mennonites with Boers appears to have fascinated Friesen." Just before he died, he wrote a letter published in the *Friedensstimme* in which he announced his next project to be a cultural and religious history of the Russian Mennonites from 1850 to the present to be entitled: *From the World of the Russian Boers or Mennonites*.<sup>12</sup>

If one looks at where this Russian Mennonite interest in the Boers was located and who was interested, one finds it in the Mennonite Brethren who later, around 1904-1908 – gathered in Halbstadt around the Raduga Press. Abraham and Jacob Kroeker became the co-editors of the *Friedensstimme* which was published by Raduga, whose director and major share holder was H. J. Braun. It was here as well that P. M. Friesen's history was published by his close friend, H. J. Braun. In 1912, the latter's brother, Peter, reviewed Friesen's tome for the *Friedensstimme*. And it was in the latter paper that Friesen announced his plans for a history on the "Russian Boers or Mennonites." That H. J. Braun was interested in the topic is made apparent by Karl Lindemann, who wrote in 1922:

Somewhat later I resided in Halbstadt [1920] (Taurida, Molotschna District) with my good friend, Heinrich Jakob Braun. He was also interested in the origins of the Russian Mennonites and their language ("Platt"). H. Braun had even compiled a list of words from this Mennonite Low German which without a doubt derived from the Dutch language and has been used by the Russian Mennonites since time out of mind and derives from their Danzig forefathers.<sup>13</sup>

An article in *Novoe Vremia* of 3 June, 1915, indeed, argued that the Mennonites of the Taurida District were much more active than other Mennonites in trying to prove their "Dutch origin." At the same time,

however, they fought local authorities to preserve their purely German-based education. At the forefront of the battle, the writer asserted, was "preacher Braun" – no doubt, H. J. Braun himself.<sup>14</sup>

All the evidence would therefore appear to indicate that the "Dutch argument" originated in Halbstadt. Not only must it have originated there, since it was reported to have been used by the Mennonite volunteers to the medical corps as early as 29 September, 1914, it must have been imparted in one fashion or another to these young men before they left for Moscow. Such general information could have reached them by means of the message that came out of the 22 July, 1914 Molotschna meeting and was read from the pulpits of all the churches in the district calling on them to volunteer for the medical corps. Or, since H. J. Braun was one of the two speakers at the 1 September farewell service for these very Molotschna reservists, he may at some point have found occasion to address them publicly or privately on the subject.<sup>15</sup> In any case, since Abraham Kroeker and P. M. Friesen were not at the original meeting, and Jacob Kroeker had been in Germany since 1910, the argument must have come, in one way or another, directly from H. J. Braun and/or his brother Peter.

By 15 August articles appeared in *Der Botschafter* dealing with what the Russian press was saying about the Germans in Russia.<sup>16</sup> And on 21 October, an article appeared reporting on rumors regarding a law intending to liquidate the land of German colonists in Russia.<sup>17</sup> In the same issue, David Epp confirmed the rumors with a report on the content of the preamble to the proposed law. This is what he told his readers:

According to the wording of the preamble, the Russian government has already been investigating foreign landholding in Russia for some thirty years. The extent and constant expansion of the same are of such a nature that the question had to be dealt with. In the Southwest region alone there were, in 1882, some 88,000 German settlers who owned some 400,000 dessiatines of land.

The explanatory preamble declares further that, from a political point of view, these German settlers are *thoroughly disloyal*. The number of those amongst them who refused military service was always enormous: in 1906, 13.5%; in 1907, 19.5%; in 1908, 20.5%; and in 1909, 22.5%. At the same time they remained members of organizations subject to Germany and Austria and served in the military of their respective countries.

On the basis of these observations the government concluded that the foreign settlers have, in spite of their long residence in Russian regions, not only not made any effort to mix with the surrounding Russian population, but they have stubbornly clung to their customs and actively separated themselves from the Russian people, upon whom they look down and whom they treat with a nearly hostile attitude. The foreign settlers can only be regarded as Russian subjects in a formal sense. In fact, *as far as their persuasions, their language, customs and religion are concerned, they are attracted to their racial brothers beyond our borders and to the centers of a foreign civilization* [my emphasis].<sup>18</sup>

The document, Epp continued, proceeded to refer to a law passed in Germany in 1870 that made citizenship inalienable unless a person was specifically released from it by direct governmental action.<sup>19</sup> By this means, the German government sought to bind settlers of German extraction living in Russia's borderlands to itself. During the Russo-Japanese War, the document asserted, many of these settlers had traveled abroad, never to return. Other incidents were recounted in which Germans had acquired Russian citizenship and then purchased strategic parcels of land for the easy passage of German troops into Russia, all of which demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt that Germany had long ago begun to set the stage for her invasion of Russia. In this planned invasion, the settlers of German extraction in Russia were to play a central role.<sup>20</sup> Clearly, Russia's western borderlands had become as politically problematic as they were, at least from Pobedonostsev's point of view, religiously and culturally problematic.

Epp then proceeded to describe the main provisions of the proposed law: 1) that German and Austro-Hungarian citizens were forbidden from buying land in certain specified regions (Western borderlands); 2) that foreign settlers and all their male descendants from these nationalities, though they may have become Russian citizens, were also to be forbidden from buying land in the above regions; 3) that persons belonging to categories 1 and 2 would no longer be allowed to rent land in the above regions; 4) that the authorities were to prepare lists of the above categories of persons, indicating each person's property; 5) that persons so listed should have two months to sell their property, but only to persons qualified to borrow money from the Peasant Bank. Any sale of property to other buyers after the promulgation of the law would automatically be null and void. 9) That property not sold within the allotted two month period would be purchased by the Peasant Bank. 10) Similarly, all rental agreements involving German and Austro-Hungarian subjects in the above regions, as well as those of the descendants of such nationalities who had become Russian subjects after 1870, would become null and void after the two month period. 12) Land so condemned could be inherited by persons encumbered in the same manner only if the property had not been in the hands of a Russian subject before 1 June, 1870. In any case, three months after such a person had taken possession of his inheritance, he would have to sell it in the manner indicated above.<sup>21</sup>

Even before the Russian Mennonites learned about the proposed liquidation laws, they were informed that their German language had been proscribed. According to H. J. Braun, publication in the German language was forbidden on 5 October. "At the same time," he continued, "the use of the German language on the streets and other public



places was forbidden. No extemporaneous sermon could any longer be preached in the German language, and no heartfelt, spontaneous prayer could be spoken in the church; one was only allowed to read printed sermons and prayers."<sup>22</sup>

The liquidation law itself was presented to the Duma on October 9, 1914, but was not approved in that body. It therefore was signed into law on 2 February, 1915, by Nicholas II under the authority of Article 87<sup>23</sup> of the Fundamental Laws issued in 1906 after the October Manifesto. This article stated:

Should extraordinary circumstances demand, when the State Duma is not in session, and the introduction of a measure requires a properly constituted legal procedure, the Council of Ministers will submit such a measure directly to the Sovereign Emperor. Such a measure cannot, however, introduce any changes into the Fundamental Laws, or to the organization of the State Council or to the State Duma, or to the rules governing elections to the Council or to the Duma. The validity of such a measure is terminated if the responsible minister or head of a special department fails to introduce appropriate legislation in the State Duma during the first two months of its session upon reconvening, or if the State Duma or the State Council should refuse to enact it into law.<sup>24</sup>

Using Article 87 to implement the land liquidation legislation was clearly an abuse of the intent and purpose of the law, especially since the Duma had already refused to approve it. Apparently the Duma did not consider the circumstances so extraordinary that such legislation, which flew in the face of the government's own repeated assertions of the inviolability of the principle of private property – at least when it came to the expropriation of the land of the large estate owners<sup>25</sup> – should immediately be passed. Whether or not the measure was in fact again submitted to the Duma for ratification when it came back into session is unclear; perhaps not. That may be the reason why a second land liquidation measure had to be signed into law by the tsar on 13 December, 1915, and a third was contemplated in January/February, 1917, all on the authority of Article 87. The desire to expand the law to other regions than the ones originally designated may also have played into the government's decision.

It was in the preamble to this proposed legislation that the Russian government gave credence to virtually every one of the worst accusations that had been made by rabid nationalists against the German and Mennonite settlers over the years. Did this indicate that it had utterly abandoned the Mennonites to their fate in an increasingly hostile environment? Long and Koch have described the reaction of the Volga Germans to these measures.<sup>26</sup> Here we are concerned with the Mennonite reaction.

The Chortitza Mennonites, immediately upon hearing of Russia's declaration of war, sent a telegram to St. Petersburg declaring their loyalty to Tsar and Empire. They did so even before they were declared disloyal in the preamble to the proposed law. Upon hearing of the law itself, they offered to send their young men into the medical corps, to open and support hospitals for the war-wounded, and to place all their wealth at the disposal of the "fatherland." It would appear they believed their loyalty to be connected with the way in which they served their fatherland. But would service in the medical corps be enough to prove their loyalty? When the preamble became known, it clearly connected disloyalty with the refusal to bear arms and the percentages of German colonists cited who refused military service must have consisted primarily, if not exclusively, of Mennonites.<sup>27</sup>

The Molotschna Mennonites, even before they saw themselves described as disloyal by the government, encouraged their young men to volunteer for service in the medical corps and offered to erect and support hospitals for wounded veterans. We are not told, however, what they did once they heard of the law. But we need to know whether Braun's *Kto takie Mennonity*, which was published in Halbstadt before the end of the year and must therefore clearly have been connected with these early war events, was written after the threat of the land liquidation law became apparent, or whether it was a response to the more general anti-Mennonite/anti-Colonist attacks brought on by the war, as Peter Braun seemed to imply in his "Archive destroyed by the Bolsheviks."<sup>28</sup> We do, of course, know some of the events that took place at this time and their dates. For example, we know that the Molotschna *Kirchenkonvent*, together with the two volost elders and a few others, met on 22 July (did they already know of the attack on the German Embassy and German merchants in St. Petersburg on that day?) to respond to the crisis caused by the war. Benjamin Unruh was not among their number, but the brothers Braun were. The minutes of the meeting do not indicate that any discussion of a possible written defense of the Mennonites took place. But it is quite possible that this same group may have met on other occasions: perhaps right after hearing about the proposed liquidation law with its charge of Mennonite disloyalty. Perhaps they too, like Epp, had access to advance information about the proposed law. If anyone would have had such information, it would have been H. J. Braun, who was both a member of the *KfK* and had connections to a number of high-ranking Russian officials. But could even he have known about the content of the preamble much before the law was submitted to the Duma on 9 October, where H. A. Bergmann and Peter Schroeder would have seen it? Epp himself can only have received a copy about a week before the publication of his 21

October article. I think we must therefore assume that both Epp and Braun cannot have had copies in hand until, at the earliest, shortly before 9 October, 1914.

If that is the case, would not the Molotschna *Kirchenkonvent* have reconvened the group that had met on 22 July to discuss this document, as the Chortitza Church did? And if it did meet as constituted, (why should it have changed membership in mid stream?), what course of action might it have recommended? It had already, at its first meeting, done what the Chortitza Mennonites did only after they heard of the law. The only thing the Molotschna group had not done was to send a telegram to St. Petersburg declaring Mennonite loyalty to Tsar and Empire. Perhaps they now decided to go Chortitza one better: to prepare a document that would prove their historic loyalty to Mother Russia; that is, if they had not already done so earlier. That the first edition of Peter Braun's *Kto takie Mennonity* is just such a defense of Mennonite loyalty is beyond dispute. But they may also have decided to do more: to prove that their principle of nonresistance was much older than their stay in Russia and had nothing whatever to do with political loyalty or disloyalty; that they had left the lands around Danzig shortly after they had come into Prussian hands, thereby demonstrating their opposition to German policies; and that, in any case, they were not of German but of Dutch descent.<sup>29</sup>

That there was a consultation of some kind on this matter is made clear by Benjamin Unruh's 24 February, 1944, letter to H. J. Braun, but he does not locate it in time. In his letter, Unruh wrote: "I am still surprised that you did not first discuss these matters at the time with Unruh [himself], the historian of church and dogma." Unruh was probably not so much surprised as chagrined that he had been left out of the loop at the time. But he also implied that "these matters" had been discussed. And if the group that did discuss them was the same as the one that met on 22 July, or if the group already discussed them at their first meeting, then Peter Braun was its secretary and H. J. Braun, as a member of the *KfK*, an influential participant. As secretary and the scholar present (P. M. Friesen had just died), what could have been more natural than to commission Peter Braun to construct such a defense? But the extent to which the issues were laid out at the meeting or left up to Braun is next to impossible to determine with the evidence at hand. What we know for a certainty is that Unruh was not present, a fact that still rankled him thirty years later. We also know that the "Dutch origins" argument was already in circulation by September, probably introduced by H. J. Braun at the 22 July meeting.

If the above comes close to the truth, then Peter Braun's document was not the product of one or even two persons; at the very least, it

had the backing of the Molotschna church and civic leaders. Rempel may therefore have been at least partially correct when he referred to the pamphlet as a "Publication of the Halbstadt Volost Government." But the writing was not a group effort, no matter how much input members of that committee might have had. The German manuscript makes it clear that the pamphlet was the product of Peter Braun alone, although it does say: "Compiled [zusammengestellt] by P. J. Braun." In 1933 one could name the author; in 1914 it might have diluted the impact of the document had it come to be regarded as the work of one individual. Perhaps for that reason it was published anonymously.

The first edition, as we noted earlier, was approved by the military censors on 26 November, 1914.<sup>30</sup> However, it must have been in print considerably before that date. What appears to have happened may be gleaned from an exchange of letters between the St. Petersburg Military Censorship Commission and the governor of Taurida. On 9 December, 1914, the Military Censorship Commission of the Central (St. Petersburg) Ministry of Military Affairs wrote the Taurida governor, asking "whether military censorship approval was obtained to publish this brochure," the reference is to Braun's *Kto takie Mennonity*. It complained that the brochure was being sent "out throughout Russia,"<sup>31</sup> and that several copies had been intercepted in the capitol.<sup>32</sup> On the 19<sup>th</sup> the governor wrote to the police supervisor in Berdiansk requesting information on the matter. The latter replied on the 28<sup>th</sup> that he had contacted representatives of Raduga and had been told that they had "sent two copies of 'Who are the Mennonites,' *on 9 September*, [my emphasis] to the Military Censorship Commission by way of the local town policeman and the manager of the printing house." He included a signed confirmation from the latter, a Johann Letkemann, to the effect that he had, *on 9 September*, sent "two copies of 'Who are the Mennonites?'" to the Taurida governor to be forwarded to the military censorship commission in Odessa."<sup>33</sup> The note was dated 18 September, 1914.

These documents help to establish a relatively precise time-line of events and in doing so clarify a number of issues that have been in doubt. First, the fact that two copies of the document were sent to the Taurida governor's office on 9 September, 1914, combined with the fact that two copies could be picked up in St. Petersburg only thirteen days at the most after permission to publish had been officially granted, indicates that the brochure must already have been printed by 9 September, perhaps even to the point of including the anticipated approval by the censorship commission.<sup>34</sup> Should this assumption prove to be in error, one will nevertheless have to concede that the manuscript must at least have been completed by that date. This means that the document must have been commissioned shortly after, if not on, that 22 July, 1914,

meeting of the Halbstadt group, and that Peter Braun wrote it within a month and a half at the most. This did not give him much time to locate the necessary documents, develop the arguments and decide what should be included and what excluded, and how to structure the piece. Second, if the document was ready, indeed in print, by 9 September, it cannot have been a response to the land liquidation law which first became known in early October, 1914. This confirms the impression gained from Peter Braun's essay on his "lost" archive. Braun's piece must therefore have been intended as a defense against the increasing chorus of attacks Mennonites were already being subjected to prior to the war, attacks which everyone feared would only worsen in a war with Germany. Third, the exchange of correspondence between St. Petersburg and the Taurida governor would also indicate that it took longer for the brochure to be cleared for publication by the military censors than it took Braun to write it. Whether this points to the care and thoroughness with which these censors worked, or simply to the normal pace of bureaucratic action (or inaction) we leave to the reader to decide. In any case, the correspondence would also appear to demonstrate that the Odessa Military Censorship Commission acted on its own in the matter without reference to the head office in St. Petersburg. Perhaps, had it consulted that central office, the document might never have passed muster. On the other hand, the fact that this exchange of letters appears to have ended the matter, and the fact that the brochure's second edition also, apparently, cleared the Odessa Military Censorship Commission after the first version of the land liquidation legislation had become law would appear to indicate that either the government was content to let the matter rest or could not do anything about it.<sup>35</sup>

To make his case in the brochure, Peter Braun needed documents: documents indicating that the Russian Mennonites were of Dutch extraction, documents relevant to their emigration from Prussia, documents dealing with their entry into Russia, but above all documents proving their loyalty to the Russian Empire. And in the process, Braun had also to gather evidence from native Russian observers of the foreign settlers that would disprove the unjust accusations of the rabid nationalists, accusations the government had first alluded to in its proposed law of 1910 but then promulgated as gospel truths in its preamble to the proposed law of 1914. The latter put a very different face on these accusations and made Mennonites feel abandoned by the one institution in Russia they still trusted, at least to a degree. The fact that Braun did not pay as much attention to the "Dutch argument" in the first edition as he did in the second would also appear to indicate that the issue of Mennonite nationality had not yet, by 9 September, 1914, become a matter

of life and death for the Russian Mennonites. When it did become critical after the anti-German land liquidation legislation became law, Braun added a significant passage on the topic to his second edition.<sup>36</sup>

In any case, to write such a piece within a month and a half was a tall order. Here the term "publish or perish" took on entirely new dimensions. No wonder Peter Braun was the man to promote the creation of a Mennonite archive so powerfully at the June, 1917 Neuhalbstadt General Conference. It was he who had become all too painfully aware of the need for an organized archive.

As historians are wont to do, Braun began his *Kto takie Mennonity* at the beginning, with Menno Simons. This helped to establish the Dutch roots of the Russian Mennonites, but as we have seen it also brought them into proximity with the Münster revolutionaries. To free Menno from this "Anabaptist" wing of the movement which might place the entire Mennonite nonresistance argument in doubt – an argument that once again came under attack at the very outset of the war – Braun had to fall back on Keller's contention that the "old evangelical brotherhoods" could, ostensibly, be traced back to the primitive church. As we have also seen, Keller's theory was by now a commonplace of Russian Mennonite historiography. Employing it meant, however, that Menno could not be regarded as the founder of the movement, but merely as its reformer. And this placed in doubt the purely Dutch character of the movement, for Waldenses had appeared everywhere in Europe, not only in the Netherlands. However, since Mennonites had already used Keller's argument in official submissions to the government to undermine the Tsarist attempt to designate them a "sect," it could hardly be abandoned now, even if Braun had wanted to; it was far too useful to establish the purity of the *Taufgesinnte* movement (in opposition to the "Anabaptists") and its consistently non-violent character.

Next, Braun turned to the persecution of the Dutch Mennonites under Charles V and his son, Philip II. To an extent because of this persecution, but also partially voluntarily, the Dutch Mennonites had migrated to territory under Polish rule, settling in the Vistula Delta and becoming Polish subjects. He then quoted extensively from various decrees issued by Polish kings between 1642 and 1732 granting special privileges to these *Dutch Mennonites*, as they were called in the documents. Some of the documents even stated that the Polish kings had "called them out of Holland."<sup>37</sup> In quoting extensively from these royal decrees which he probably took from the appendix to Szper's book, Braun appears to have sought to accomplish at least two things: first, to demonstrate the Dutch origins of the Russian Mennonites; second, to make the point that Mennonites had lived very peacefully under Slavic rule for a long time. Indeed, the Polish kings had repeatedly com-

mended the Mennonites as model citizens. Mennonites had spent some 250 years under Polish rule, and when Prussia had taken over the Polish territories in which they lived after the Seven Years' War, they had migrated to Slavic Russia. Had Braun appreciated the extent to which Russians hated the Poles since their uprising against Russia in 1863, he might have omitted this argument.

To prove that these Dutch Mennonites had not been then (nor were their Russian descendants now) anti-Slavic, Braun argued that during their Polish sojourn,

. . . Several insignificant Slavic groups joined them, especially from the Czech-Moravian Brethren, who had already settled in Poland before the Mennonites. Some Poles also joined them. Among the Russian Mennonites this Slavic element is indicated by the following family names that are to be found amongst them: Sawatsky, Koslowsky, Rogalsky, Delesky, Schapansky, Selewsky, Ratzlaff (from Radoslav), Spenset (from Uspensky?), etc.<sup>38</sup>

Yet, when all was said and done, Russian Mennonites spoke German. This does not appear to have concerned Braun overly much in the first edition, for he did not explain how the transition from Dutch to German had come about. Only in the second edition did he do so. The Mennonites did not at first recognize the inconsistency of trying to persuade the government of their Dutch heritage while at the same time objecting to the prohibition of the use of the German language in print and pulpit. It was only when they were told by the government in response, as Van der Smissen put it later, that they could avoid any and all problems by simply reverting to the use of their "native" tongue, that they realized they had a problem on their hands. At the same time, the second edition was clearly intended as a response to the land liquidation law; this made the "Dutch argument" much more critical. In that second edition Braun therefore asserted that there could be no doubt that the Mennonites who had come to Poland knew Dutch, for it was the language they had used in their church services. Their everyday language, however, had been a *Plattdeutsch* that probably had its origin in the region around Gronningen. They still employed that same Low German dialect, modified somewhat during their stay in the Vistula Delta, in their everyday discourse, but the transition to High German in their church services had come only in the mid to late eighteenth century. To establish this fact, Braun quoted from the preface to the first German (1768) edition of the Prussian Mennonite *Hymn Book*, where one could read:

Earlier our brothers in the faith had their hymnals published in Dutch. However, in light of the fact that the Prussian Mennonites, *whose native coun-*

*try was Holland*, were gradually losing their knowledge of Dutch and even began preaching and instructing the youth in German – making it clear that the majority could no longer understand the language – they found it necessary to introduce the singing of hymns in German in their church services. A few of the ministers and teachers in the local congregations therefore decided to collect hymns that agreed with our religious principles and publish a hymnal for both private and congregational use. The words of many Dutch hymns were replaced with German words,” etc.<sup>39</sup>

Pointing to evidence that indicated other Prussian/Polish Mennonite groups had made the transition even later, Braun made the point that one should not assume that language always indicated nationality. Even in Russia itself there were a number of colonies, originally founded by Frenchmen, Swedes, and even Scots, which now, because of the language originally employed by Russian officials in their dealings with them, all spoke German.<sup>40</sup>

But if the Prussian Mennonites had switched from their Dutch language to that of German, did this not indicate that they had come under German influence culturally and politically, had perhaps even intermarried with the surrounding populace and thus diluted their heritage, becoming cultural Germans in the process as Bondar, Pisarevsky, and the Russian government itself argued? To counter such a conclusion, Braun was forced to use an argument that cannot have strengthened his case. He admitted that

. . . the intercourse with the surrounding world exerted a powerful and assimilating influence upon them. This cannot be said with regard to the Mennonites, however. [He had just sought to make the case that Prussian Mennonites had assimilated a good number of Poles.] Though they may have changed their language because of their changed environment, ***there is no evidence of any significant assimilation because they always lived in isolated communities*** [my emphasis].<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, in Prussia they were forbidden to accept outsiders into their communities; in Russia, even though the acceptance of Lutherans or Protestants in general was not exactly forbidden, it was hedged about by so many impediments that very few examples of male conversions exist. The Mennonites themselves, during their first years in Russia (examples exist from the 1820s), excommunicated members from their brotherhood who entered into marriages with non-Mennonites, no matter what their nationality. For these reasons the vast majority of them remain today who they were, and history tells us unmistakably that their original homeland was the Netherlands. Therefore, in accordance with their nationality, one can only call them Dutch.

Perhaps because of his haste to complete the second edition, Braun failed to notice that he was employing arguments that contradicted ones he had employed in the first edition. For if Mennonites had always lived in isolated communities – an argument used to establish the “purity” of the Russian Mennonites’ Dutch lineage – how could they have assimilated a



significant number of Slavic Poles into their fellowship? And yet Braun wished to use the assimilation of the Poles to demonstrate that the Russian Mennonites were more pro-Slavic than pro-German. Furthermore, was Braun not aware that the rabid nationalists, and now also the Russian government, held their isolation against them and that his contention confirmed their accusations? Perhaps the fact that Braun inserted whole sections into the first edition without carefully reviewing the arguments it contained led to these and similar problems.

From the above concerns, Braun turned to the history of the Mennonites in Russia. Here he reproduced Catherine's 1763 *Manifesto*, described how Von Trappe had wooed the Vistula Delta Mennonites, though not as fully as he would in the second and third editions. The requests presented to Potemkin – with the latter's responses – and Paul's great *Privilegium*, were only included in the third edition. He also reproduced some very positive Russian evaluations of the early Mennonite settlements (to be added to in the later editions) and then proceeded nearly immediately to 1873-1874 and the military exemption crisis in the Mennonite colonies, describing its resolution in the forestry service of young Mennonite men, a form of service totally underwritten by Mennonite contributions, and the Mennonite position on non-resistance. In the last section, Braun described "Mennonite participation in Russia's wars." Here, again, he added significant documentary evidence in the later editions. In this section Braun was concerned to demonstrate that, despite the fact that Mennonites refused to serve in the military, they contributed in other ways, and at times sacrificially, to support the Russian Empire in time of war, especially the Crimean and Russo-Japanese Wars. To prove his point, Braun reproduced letters from participating generals and journalists, greatly expanded in the second edition, commending Mennonites on their selfless service and their creation of hospitals to care for the wounded, all done at their own expense. They provided transportation, food and clothing for the troops, quartering them when they passed through their villages, and much more. He even reproduced a letter from the then Minister of State Domains, Count P. Kisselev, written in the name of Tsar Alexander I, commending the Mennonites on their extraordinary service. And then, nearly as an afterthought (though it most certainly was not) Braun attempted to demonstrate the Mennonite concern for their Russian neighbors by narrating numerous incidents during years of famine when the Mennonites had brought food and clothing to starving Russian communities, thereby helping them back on their feet. Included were a number of letters from grateful Russian recipient communities.

In conclusion, Braun observed:

The Mennonites have never, nor will they ever forget what they owe Russia: for this reason their allegiance to the fatherland is natural and sincere. Not only has their historical past not placed any obstacles in the way of the development of such sentiments; it has actively promoted them. Driven into other lands, the Mennonite ancestors found shelter and asylum in Russia, which welcomed them with great hospitality and extended to them a profound understanding and complete toleration of their religious convictions at the most precarious moment of their existence. It is for this reason that the Mennonites regard every attack upon Russia's honor an attack on their own spiritual property, for no other European state has given them what Russia has.

The fact that young Mennonites have hurried to the aid of the fatherland by the hundreds during the present [1914] war, especially to Moscow to volunteer for military service as medics, thereby giving themselves, in light of the number of sick and wounded soldiers, completely to the holy cause of mercy and service to their fellow man – this together with the considerable gifts which the Mennonites have made during the time of this war in terms of money, personal service, and produce of all kinds – demonstrate all too visibly that the mighty upsurge of patriotism, which gripped the nation at the outset of the war, has touched them as well; that they, as the result of a profound historical recognition, have come to see themselves as true sons of Mother Russia and, in the most dangerous hour of her greatest testing, have united as one with all the devoted sons of great Russia in the protection of Tsar and Fatherland.<sup>42</sup>

A stirring conclusion, but was it not somewhat overblown? Had young Mennonite men really been motivated to volunteer because of a “mighty upsurge of patriotism,” or because their leaders had called upon them to do so? Not that the two had to be mutually exclusive.

On 2 February, 1915 the liquidation legislation, either rejected by or not acted upon in the Duma, became law under article 87 of the Fundamental Laws issued in 1906 after the October Manifesto. This first liquidation law did not yet apply to territories in which Mennonites lived in any numbers. Nevertheless, H. A. Bergmann, the largest Mennonite landowner in Russia, delivered a speech in the Duma opposing it on the very day Nicholas II signed it.

On 11 March, 1915, E. V. Menkin, Director of the Department of Religious Affairs, wrote H. V. Grudistov that his department had been investigating the Mennonite forestry service and would soon issue a report on its legitimacy.<sup>43</sup> On 22 April the Ministry of Internal Affairs forwarded a letter from the Supervisor of the Central Committee of the All-Russian United Nobility Convention to Menkin, addressing the land liquidation issue. Among other matters, it suggested that the liquidation laws ought also to apply to Mennonites and all other “sectarians” who refused to bear arms.<sup>44</sup> About the same time, articles began to appear in the capitol's newspapers suggesting that the universal draft law would soon also apply to the Mennonites.<sup>45</sup> The latter responded to this threat with a letter in May to the Ministry of Internal Affairs

defending their exemption. Once again they began by arguing that they were "originally from Holland" and that they had left their homeland in Poland only after Prussia had taken it over as a result of the "second partition," because she had been hostile to Mennonite pacifist beliefs. In their hour of need, the Russian government under Catherine the Great had promised them exemption from military service "for ever" and Paul I had confirmed this in his great charter, as had Nicholas I in 1838. When the laws had changed in 1873 in this regard, Mennonites had been able to work out a compromise with the government whereby they were allowed to fulfill their obligation to the state in forestry camps. Now, despite their trust in Mother Russia and the Tsar, the government was once more trying to take away this right. It should know, however, that it would violate Mennonite consciences and destroy the Mennonite faith if they were forced to kill. Hence, they requested only service in the medical units and military hospitals.<sup>46</sup>

On 5 June the Military Conscription/Mobilization Department wrote to the Department of Religious Affairs indicating that, at its request, it had prepared a press release regarding the liquidation of Mennonite and sectarian land ownership. It appeared a few days later in the *Press Review*, entitled: "State of Emergency Needs."

Referring back to the All-Nobility Convention, whose recommendations, it said, went beyond those of the government, the release stated that the committee's most important recommendation had been the liquidation of all Mennonite property as well as that of others who had a "convenient theology" for avoiding military service. Russian citizenship, the release stated, brought with it certain responsibilities, the most important of which was the protection of the country in time of war. But Mennonites and other sectarians were exempted from that responsibility. What was more, while the land hungry Russian peasant was sacrificing his life for Mother Russia, the alien Germanic Mennonite farmer stayed at home and got rich. This was intolerable.<sup>47</sup>

Could it have been in response to sentiments like these from a powerful lobbying group that the Governor of Taurida, sometime in March, sent out an order to the volost governments of Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld to make a list of all the parcels of land held by "Germans" in their regions as mandated in articles 4 and 5 of the 2 February law? Whatever the case, on 12 March the Halbstadt Volost government responded to the order; the Gnadenfeld Volost responded one day later, on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Halbstadt proclaimed: "... no Mennonite settlers were reported in a listing of landowners of German descent because, having Dutch ancestry, they are exempt from the consequences of the 2 February law."<sup>48</sup> And the Gnadenfeld Volost, appearing to be somewhat more forthcoming, listed a few landowners of German descent, such as:

Wedler, Uhl, Schaad, Balauf, Horn, and so on, but then stated: “. . . none of the Mennonite landowners of Gnadenfeld uyzed were reported in a listing of landowners of German descent. Since the ancestral home of the Mennonites is Holland they are exempt from the liquidation measures of 2 February.”<sup>49</sup>

On 4 April, 1915 the Taurida governor's office requested “a more thorough listing” of the landowners of the region, though it made some concessions to the Mennonites. The request stated that “not all Mennonites must be reported, but only those whose ancestors gave up their Dutch citizenship and became German citizens, and then became Russian citizens as Germans.”<sup>50</sup> On 22 April, 1915 the Supervisor of the Berdiansk District responded, accepting as fact that Mennonites were of “Dutch descent” and that they had held Russian citizenship since the late eighteenth century. But, he continued, “it has not been unequivocally established whether their ancestors transferred directly from Dutch into Russian citizenship, or through German citizenship.” Nevertheless, he saw “good reasons to assume” that at least a minority of them had settled in Russia “immediately after the Partition of Poland while others became Prussian subjects for a brief time, which they soon escaped by settling in Russia.” It made sense to the Supervisor therefore to regard the Mennonites “to be of Dutch descent.” Given these circumstances, he wondered whether a “separate list ought to be compiled for these Dutch settlers or whether the current ones would suffice.”<sup>51</sup> Apparently they did not, for on 29 April the governor's office wrote back: “Those Mennonites who can provide indisputable evidence that they are of Dutch ancestry are not subject to any liquidation measures. Other than that, all lists of the landowners must be submitted.”<sup>52</sup>

On 1 and 2 May such lists were finally turned in. At the head of the lists stood the following statement:

Personal Property Listing of lands in Taurida gubernia owned and used as property of a) volost, village council formed out of former Austrian, Hungarian, German citizen colonists, settlers and foreign wheat growers and their descendants and also individuals of Austrian, Hungarian and German descent by male blood line; b) Austrian, Hungarian or German settlers who became Russian citizens after 1 January, 1880, or those who became citizens of other countries after that (date) and then became Russian citizens; c) collective land associations, which have co-owners of this descent.

There followed then a listing of the “society of settlers of Molotschansk, Molotschansk Volost, Berdiansk District,” with names such as: “Neufeld, Heinrich Hermann; Lepp, Cornelius Cornelius; Lepp, Peter Cornelius; Lepp, Johann Cornelius; heirs of Susanna Friesen: David, Heinrich, Johann, Jacob, Elena, and Anna Johann Friesen; Letkemann,

Henrich Heinrich," and on and on. But on each page of the list the Mennonites also protested their being designated Germans and having the law applied to them by stating in writing:

**CITIZENSHIP THEY BELONGED TO:** [Mennonites] consider themselves to be descendants of Holland, stating that their ancestors came out of Holland around 1540 to Poland, and their ancestors were Polish citizens until the Partition of Poland in 1772 and 1793 and after its [Poland's] partition they ended up in Prussia, from which they settled into Russia and became Russian citizens.<sup>53</sup>

But where was the evidence to support this assertion?

Along with the lists and the above statement, personal testimonies were, according to the Supervisor's reports, also sent in by individual Mennonite landowners asserting their Dutch ancestry. However, they were unable to "provide any official documentation" to back up their claims.<sup>54</sup> In a later statement the Berdiansk Supervisor confirmed to the Taurida Governor that ". . . most Mennonites on the lists state their nationality to be Dutch or of Dutch origin."<sup>55</sup> He continued: "all of them adhere to the following written explanation of their nationality," and he quoted the statement Mennonites had placed at the top of their property lists which we have quoted above.

The compulsory listing of their property for purposes of the land liquidation law must have brought home the seriousness of the matter to the Mennonites. At the same time, by 29 April they were being offered an escape from the law's consequences if they could provide "indisputable evidence" that Russian Mennonites really were of Dutch descent. Perhaps it was this last statement and the seeming failure of the submission of Braun's brochure to make any difference in an early appeal to the authorities that was the motivation for Peter Braun and his Molotschna backers to put out a second edition of *Kto takie Mennonity* with its attempt to expand and strengthen the "Dutch argument." For already on 11 May, 1915 a David David Dirks from Halbstadt petitioned the governor's office to be exempted from the land liquidation laws on the basis of Braun's *Kto takie Mennonity*, along with an attestation from the village elders, as documentary proof of his Dutch ancestry.<sup>56</sup> A few days later, an Abraham Abraham Mathies of Altenau also petitioned the governor to have his lands removed from the lists on the basis of his Dutch ancestry. But he conceded that "at this time we cannot present documentary proof of this."<sup>57</sup> Having discovered that his lands, too, were to be liquidated, a Cornelius Cornelius Huebert also sent in a petition to be exempted. But he did claim to have documents that proved that the Hueberts were descendants of settlers "who lived in the free city of Danzig from whence they left for Russia

in 1789 and thus are an exception from Germans living in the area." As proof he submitted the following documents: a certificate from the Chortitza Volost administration dated 18 July, 1915, and a copy of Von Trappe's letter of 3 May, 1788 from Amsterdam to Count Ostermann.<sup>58</sup> Huebert and Mathies even employed a Russian lawyer by the name of Ivan Zakharyevich Kiryan to prepare and present their petitions.<sup>59</sup> But none of these presented petitions contained any really convincing evidence to prove the Mennonite case.

Braun's second edition cleared the military censors on 26 June, 1915. If it took as long to pass muster there as had the first edition, it must have been sent in either in late April or early May, 1915, about the time the lists were being turned in to the Taurida governor's office.<sup>60</sup> Shortly after its publication, Professor G. G. Pisarevsky, whose earlier favorable history of the German colonies Peter Braun had repeatedly cited to confirm the arguments in his brochure,<sup>61</sup> wrote to refute Braun's and the Mennonites' "Dutch argument." In an article, dated 20 July, 1915 in *Utro Rossi*, he disputed the Mennonite claim, arguing that Russian Mennonites were German. To bolster his case, he cited a letter from Von Trappe which stated that the latter had not been able to bring any Dutch colonists back with him as a result of his visit to Holland. Lindemann, who had read the article at the time, was not persuaded. Therefore, during the summer of 1915, he searched the Central Archives of the Ministry of External Affairs and there read through all of Von Trappe's reports. While doing so, he discovered a letter, dated 3 May, 1788, to Count Ostermann which had said: "A conference of All Mennonite Elders will soon be held here, and the Danzig Mennonites, **whose ancestors all came from Holland . . .**" Here was documentary evidence of the Dutch ancestry of the Russian Mennonites from the Russian government's own chief negotiator of Mennonite immigration at the time. His statement was that "all" their ancestors had come from Holland. Lindemann immediately sent a copy of the letter to Duma representative, H. A. Bergmann, who, together with David H. Epp, published it in their pamphlet: *The Question of Mennonite Origins* (Petrograd 1915).<sup>62</sup>

Braun had either not known of, or not had access to, these letters; therefore Epp and Bergmann's pamphlet was probably intended to serve as an addendum to Braun's piece, for it provided the documentary evidence for his "Dutch" assertions the Russian authorities ostensibly appeared to be looking for. In an introduction, consisting of three short sections, Epp discussed the following topics: first, "Mennonites are not of Prussian Descent"; second, "Mennonites are of Dutch Descent"; and third, "Mennonites Settled in Russia at the Invitation of the Russian Government."<sup>63</sup> In the first part, Epp was concerned to convince the

Russian authorities that Mennonites had left the Danzig area precisely because they anticipated that, after the partitions of Poland, the "Prussian yoke" would prove catastrophic to them.<sup>64</sup> He even quoted from a letter by Von Trappe to Potemkin of 7 February, 1787, telling the latter that this was a particularly auspicious moment to invite Mennonites to Russia because "Mennonites are very good farmers and are afraid of the hated Prussian yoke." In the second part, Epp quoted from Von Trappe's letter to Count Osterman of 3 May, 1788 supplied him by Lindemann, that Mennonites "are free people, of Dutch origin," indeed, that all these Mennonites had "come from Holland." And in the third part, he stressed the fact that Potemkin had sent Trappe to entice the Mennonites to come to Russia. Here was an agent of the Russian government, who had initiated contacts with the Mennonites in the first place, calling them "Dutch." Epp quoted other statements from Trappe's letters to the same effect and concluded with Pisarevsky's own statement that bringing Danzig immigrants to Russia had been a matter of the greatest importance to the Russian government at the time.

The introductory section to Epp and Bergmann's pamphlet also included a letter from Bishop Abraham Klassen of Halbstadt to H. A. Bergmann telling him where to find certain of Trappe's letters cited in Pisarevsky's history. He had been encouraged to do so, he said, by David H. Epp himself.<sup>65</sup> There then followed copies of three of Von Trappe's letters, two in German and another in French, with Russian translations. These letters contained the following passages: "... um die nach Russland emigrirenden Danziger Mennoniten, die in ihren Vorfahren *sämmtlich aus Holland stammen* . . . ;"<sup>66</sup> "... des gens tout-à-fait libres, *d'origine Hollandais* . . . ;"<sup>67</sup> and: "... wie solches freien Leuten, *deren Vorfahren von Holland* hierher ausgewandert sind und die nun bei ihrer Abfahrt ihre Schulden bezahlen werden . . . ."<sup>68</sup>

The pamphlet may appear to have been hurriedly put together, but if we see it as an addendum to Braun's brochure containing documentary evidence of the Dutch origin of the Russian Mennonites, then it fulfilled a very specific purpose: to prove that Russian Mennonites were predominantly of Dutch origin and that they had left the Danzig area for fear of the dreaded "Prussian yoke," that is, that Mennonites were neither German nor did they have any sympathy with Germany's (Prussia's) militaristic aims. Indeed, they had left when these militaristic aims threatened them in the 1780s. They had no more sympathy with them now that they also threatened Russia.

When one compares this "Chortitza" document with that written and compiled by Peter Braun, one is struck by the differences between the two. The first is limited in scope and purpose; the second much more comprehensive and meant to address a variety of issues. The two

nevertheless complement each other, for by providing documentary proof of the Dutch origin of the Russian Mennonites the Epp/Bergmann pamphlet served to confirm Braun's basic argument. Epp's pamphlet also demonstrates the extent to which the Mennonite defense had come to focus on one primary issue: the Dutch origin of the Russian Mennonites. It is also conclusive proof that both men as well as their larger Mennonite constituencies (Molotschna and Chortitza) were in agreement as to the use of the "Dutch argument." All of which negates Benjamin Unruh's repeated assertion that Russian Mennonites did not support the use of this argument during the war.

If the publication of these documents were intended to stop the government from extending the liquidation laws to the Mennonites, they were a failure, for on 13 December, 1915 the government passed the second of its liquidation laws. This one greatly expanded the scope of the first to include all of Finland, twenty-nine provinces in southern and western Russia, the entire Caucasus, and the Amur territory. It included all lands originally allotted to the colonists, individually or collectively, at the time of their settlement in Russia.<sup>69</sup>

About mid June, 1915, H. J. Braun was forced to flee Halbstadt in order to avoid arrest and banishment for religious propagandistic activity.<sup>70</sup> Shortly before his threatened arrest, however, he had been, according to his own statement, elected as the "plenipotentiary for the large landowners of the Melitopol District until the fall of the provisional government."<sup>71</sup> This election must have taken place at what an anonymous writer called a "special meeting" of a large group of Mennonite landowners. The meeting itself may have resulted from the Taurida governor's April insistence that lists of Mennonite landholdings be turned in to him. According to the same writer, a number of things were decided at that meeting: first, that since the "vast majority" of the Mennonites were of Dutch ancestry, an argument they had already made on every list submitted, that every one of them [the Mennonite landowners] should send a personal petition to His Majesty, the Tsar, and ask for mercy [um Begnadigung bitten]; second, the document stated that, "as plenipotentiary in this matter brother H. Braun of Halbstadt was elected who soon afterwards left for St. Petersburg, and from time to time sent us information [on his activity]." The writer then goes on to say that "Brother Braun was supported financially by the [Mennonite] volost governments"<sup>72</sup> who were still wealthy at the time. This document, then, substantiates H. J. Braun's assertion that he was, during his stay in St. Petersburg from mid June, 1915 until April/May, 1917, the official representative of the Mennonite landowners with financial backing from the volost governments. As Karl Lindemann indicated, the above meeting generated some 5,200 petitions to the Tsar from Stavropol, Kherson, and



Ekaterinoslav Districts, all requesting to be excluded from the liquidation lists that, as we have seen, had already been drawn up.<sup>73</sup> These requests were either rejected or never acted upon.<sup>74</sup>

By the time the second land liquidation law was passed on 13 December, 1915, therefore, Braun must already have been in St. Petersburg for some time. According to Lindemann, he first went to Moscow where he was given letters of commendation to high ranking officials in the St. Petersburg government. Once there, he came under the protection of Prince Volkonsky, former Vice President of the Duma and now Assistant to the Minister of Internal Affairs.<sup>75</sup> But we know virtually nothing about Braun's activity during the almost two years of his stay in the capitol except for one alleged notorious incident that was to create considerable turmoil on the Mennonite home front. This incident will be treated in its proper place.

In the meantime, on 21 September, the Ministry of Internal Affairs sent a letter to all governors complaining about the local rules and self-government by which Mennonite communities operated. All such local options, the letter stated, should be done away with and the law of the land implemented. To that end the Ministry of Justice was about to look into the matter and mandate the universal enforcement of the law.<sup>76</sup> On the 24<sup>th</sup>, the Ekaterinoslav governor wrote the Department of General Affairs, perhaps with reference to the above initiative, but also in reply to H. A. Bergmann's speech on the liquidation law in the Duma. The letter is intriguing because it presents us with a local, high ranking government official's perception of the Mennonites in his region.

Mennonites, the governor began, had been living in the Ekaterinoslav region for over one hundred years; during that entire period they had completely ignored the local population. They constituted a population of 24,875 and owned some 336,777 dessiatines of land. They formed their own settlements, controlled their own village councils and volosts in which all business was transacted in the German language. In the farming and industrial enterprises owned by the Mennonites, all management and highest paid jobs were held by their own people; Russians held the menial jobs and were paid the lowest wages. Mennonites owned their own hospitals, drugstores, even a mental institute, in which the personnel and nurses were German, as were the teachers in the Central and village schools where their young people studied.

From the political and the demographic, the governor turned to the subject of Mennonite nonresistance. Officially, he said, Mennonites were not to shed blood or fight in the army. Yet during 1914-1915 alone, the district police had confiscated firearms from 885 Mennonites and arrested 369 on weapons charges. At the same time, Mennonites looked down upon the Russian people, criticized Russia's laws, tradi-

tions and army, and were fascinated with everything German: praising its culture, military might and superiority over Russia. Some 48 had been sent to remote regions (read Siberia) for expressing open support for Germany and hostility toward Russia.

To support his contention that Mennonites should no longer be granted exemption from military service, the governor asserted that the Mennonites' religion made as little difference in their lives as the Catholic and Lutheran faith made in the lives of the German colonists. For that reason it would be quite unfair to the latter to exempt Mennonites from actual military service, no matter how many of them volunteered for service in the medical corps. Furthermore, such continued exemption would only confuse the local population since it saw no differences among these groups.<sup>77</sup> Nothing came of the government's attempt to abolish the Mennonite exemption from military service at this time, however.

Some months later, in April 1916, the St. Petersburg newspapers began circulating rumors that the government was once more thinking of extending the universal conscription laws to the Mennonites in order to force them into military service. According to Lindemann, Mennonites became extremely upset at the prospect. As a consequence, the Molotschna church leaders, perhaps the same group that had met on 22 July, 1914, met to draft a memorandum that was presented to the Minister of Internal Affairs on 16 May, 1916. It read as follows:

When our forefathers, *who had come from Holland to Poland in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries*, came under Prussian rule in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and began to experience oppression with respect to the free exercise of their religion and especially because of their rejection of military service, Catherine's *Manifesto* of 22 May, 1763 was circulated amongst them. Article 7 of that document promised, not only that all foreigners migrating to Russia would be freed from military service, but that they would be exempt from every form of service to the state. This promise caused the Mennonites to migrate to Russia.

Based on this manifesto, Mennonites entered into negotiations with the Russian government. The latter recommended that they put their requests in writing; this document was presented to Potemkin and confirmed by Empress Catherine II on 5 July, 1787. Of special importance to the Mennonites was article 7 of this document, which stated: "***We confirm here once more that the Mennonites and their descendants shall be exempt from all military service for all time***" (see State Archive Nr. 18,372 and vol. 26 of the Law Code). At the same time, the Russian Plenipotentiary in Danzig presented the Mennonites with the copy of a document, notarized on 3 March, 1788, which promised, in the name of the empress, to present them with a hand-written *Privilegium*, duly signed by her and sealed with the Russian state seal, after they had settled in the land.

These imperial promises caused the Mennonites to migrate to Russia.

The first group of Mennonites arrived here in 1789 trusting in the promises of 31 March, 1788. In 1800 Tsar Paul provided them with a document which

again confirmed all the privileges granted to the Mennonites. In article 6 of this document it states: "We promise with our imperial word that none of the Mennonites who have immigrated, nor any of the others who will yet come, nor their children or their descendants, shall ever be forced into either military or civil service" (see the complete collection of laws, vol. 26, Nr. 19,549).

This *Privilegium* was confirmed on 9 November, 1838 by Tsar Nicholas I.

Having settled in Russia, the Mennonites, after all of the oppression they had experienced in Prussia, felt as though they had found a new home.

Until the introduction of the universal conscription law of 1874 the Mennonites, in accordance with Tsar Paul's decree, had been free from military service. When word reached the Mennonites at the time that the law was also to be extended to them, they were dismayed that the privileges granted them could be taken away. But the government heard their petition and so the 1875 law dealing with the service of the Mennonites did not violate the freedom of conscience they had been granted. They were not forced to bear arms; rather, in accordance with article 139 of the conscription law, they were granted the right to fulfill their service in the forestry camps (article 23 of the forestry law).

Now the Mennonites learn that the government intends to limit these lawfully granted rights and wishes to place them, with regard to military service, on an equal footing with every other imperial subject.

The Mennonites are well aware of their obligation to serve the fatherland faithfully and enthusiastically; to be, at all times and under all conditions no matter how dangerous or demanding, ready to fulfill their duty. Nevertheless, Mennonites cannot be indifferent toward the anticipated law, which could force them to act in opposition to their consciences and the teachings of their confession of faith. Therefore we petition the Minister that, when he comes to formulate the law, he take into consideration our willingness to serve the fatherland, but also our confession of faith which is strict in forbidding us from shedding blood.

Should the government be willing to take the desires of the Mennonites with respect to the form of the service required of them into consideration, we would request that Mennonites be *required* to fulfill the duties of medics in hospitals or anywhere else as needed, even in time of peace. To those who might argue that the number of those so called into service would far exceed the number of positions needed, we would answer that the Mennonites are a tightly circumscribed group which only experiences a moderate increase in population through natural growth. Therefore the number of those called up in peacetime (about 1,200 men) would not vary greatly over time . . . .<sup>78</sup>

The Molotschna Mennonites had been the first to volunteer their young men for service in the medical corps after the declaration of war. Chortitza only followed later. Here, now, they offered to make such service mandatory for young Mennonite men, even in time of peace, something they had refused to do earlier. Yet no matter how far they went in this direction, Mennonite sons were still not required to sacrifice their lives on the field of battle as were the sons of the Ukrainian and Russian families around them.

The reports in the St. Petersburg newspapers concerning the government's attempt to eliminate Mennonite military exemption proved cor-

rect. On 11 August, 1916, A. A. Khvostov, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, submitted a request to that body to initiate the conscription of Mennonites into the army, arguing that they ought to be subject to the same regulations that applied to the rest of the population. The Council agreed to submit the proposal to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. This was done on 10 September in a letter to Boris V. Stuermer. From there the proposal went to the Tsar himself.

In his letter, Khvostov described the background of Mennonite exemption from military service in Russia, revisited the events surrounding the 1873/74 conscription law and the subsequent implementation of Mennonite forestry service. Then he observed:

Now, we need to consider the fact that, when settling in Russia, almost all of them [the Mennonites] came from Prussia and have remained Germans, even though they have lived here for over one hundred years. And, like other German colonists, they have lived isolated from the Russian population. They still converse primarily in German among themselves; some still do not understand Russian. The Mennonites maintained strong ties to Germany and its culture by mail before the war. According to reports from the Post and Telegraph agencies of four volosts (Halbstadt, Gnadenfeld, Nikolaipol and Chortitza) the following volume of correspondence (letters, parcels, etc.) with Germany took place:

1911	Sent: 39,470	Received: 65,531
1912	Sent: 45,681	Received: 66,698
1913	Sent: 51,290	Received: 84,411

Khvostov proceeded to state that although it might appear meaningless to conscript "such a small remnant of reservists," it had to be done as a matter of principle since Mennonite exemption was unfair to the rest of the population and especially "to those sectarians of similar belief who have also been drafted."

Having justified Mennonite conscription "on principle," Khvostov proceeded to list the "large quantities of weapons . . . confiscated from the Mennonites of Kherson, Taurida and Ekaterinoslav gubernii right after the declaration of war" despite Mennonite assertions that the bearing of arms was against their faith. He observed:

. . . In the Ekaterinoslav region, out of 792 Mennonites from whom guns were confiscated, 347 were revolvers. In the two volosts – Gnadenfeld and Halbstadt – of the Taurida region, with a total of 2,447 homeowners, 1,040 had guns which were confiscated. Halbstadt even had a gun shop, owned by a Mennonite. Such large quantities of revolvers suggest that Mennonites intend to use their weapons for purposes other than hunting . . .

In conclusion Khvostov observed that the Russian Mennonites' fellow-believers in Holland and Germany had already given up their claim to military exemption shortly after the turn of the nineteenth century.<sup>79</sup>

Khvostov's letter was apparently forwarded to the Tsar himself. The latter responded by arguing that the policy recommended by the Council of Ministers would be impossible to implement in time of war, especially since some 10,000 Mennonites were already serving either in forestry camps or medical units. Furthermore, it would have a devastating effect upon them and their faith.<sup>80</sup> When Khvostov stepped down and was succeeded by A. D. Protopopov, a former Second Vice President of the Duma, the latter therefore refused to proceed with the proposal. On 6 October, 1916, he wrote the military draft board:

Regarding the question whether or not Mennonites should be compelled into active military service like everyone else, the Tsar has expressed the wish that the greatest caution be exercised in the matter in order not to repeat the error in the case of the Dukhobors . . . .

We must therefore respect the Mennonite confession of faith and allow them to serve as medics and the like on the front. Please inform me how matters turn out.

On 19 October, Protopopov received the following reply:

The Council of Ministers met on 14 October and thoroughly discussed your predecessor's memorandum of 10 September, 1916 which recommended extending compulsory military service to the Mennonites like everyone else. In light of Your Excellency's letter of 6 October, 1916 in which you inform us that it is impossible for you to support your predecessor's proposal, the Council decided not to discuss the matter further.<sup>81</sup>

Once more Mennonites were spared by the intervention of a minister favorably disposed to them<sup>82</sup> and the Tsar's fear of alienating a religious minority. By this time, late 1916, he had little enough support left in the realm, the war having turned into a national disaster. And the reference to the Dukhobors is interesting; they had been persecuted by the government for refusing military service and had then migrated to Canada in the late nineteenth century in large numbers. Their reaction to government persecution must have left a lasting impression, for this "error" is brought up time and again as a caution already in the government's dealings with the 1860 secessionists.

Whereas the Mennonites were able to retain their military exemption in the fall of 1916, the liquidation law of 13 December, 1915 came gradually to be implemented in the Mennonite settlements beginning in August/September of 1916.<sup>83</sup> Estate owners were the first to be affected.<sup>84</sup> According to H. J. Braun,

The law stipulated that any owner's liquidated land was to be paid for – at least partially – in cash; the greater part, however, was to be paid for with notes

redeemable in 25 years. But no one, whose land was liquidated, ever received a penny for his property.<sup>85</sup>

Obviously, Epp and Bergmann's brochure, the 5,200 personal petitions from Mennonite landowners, and a special memorandum on the liquidation laws submitted by the Mennonites to the Council of Ministers<sup>86</sup> in 1915 had fallen on deaf ears. In all of these attempts the Mennonites had requested to be exempted from the law on the basis of their Dutch ethnicity. When this approach failed, they turned to other measures. According to Jacob H. Janzen,

... When the statute of expropriation hovered over us and was carried out to a degree [probably late summer/early fall of 1916], we had hundreds of thousands with which to bribe high officials to suspend the law. Unfortunately, the ministers were reluctant to receive these 'gifts,' and that was our greatest concern ...<sup>87</sup>

Was H. J. Braun, who spent the greater part of the war in St. Petersburg, involved in these attempts to bribe government officials? Were other monies involved than the ones supplied to Braun by the wealthy Mennonite volost governments?<sup>88</sup>

By mid 1916, as Janzen reports, the Molotschna and other Mennonite settlements were very much aware of what had happened to the Volhynian Germans who had had their lands liquidated after the first law was passed. He observed:

... Our concerns were for our loved ones at home. They were subject to the liquidation law and were threatened with resettlement. We had witnessed what had happened to the resettled Germans from Volhynia. The governor of Karkhov, a certain Koschchuro-Massalisky, let their children starve to death at a time when there was still bread to spare in Russia. Go and visit the German cemetery in Karkhov and find the graves of the Volhynian children who died of hunger in 1915, and who were buried twelve at a time in a single grave.<sup>89</sup>

Were the Mennonites next? If government authorities would not accept the proof for their "Dutch argument," could they be bribed to exempt the Mennonites in exchange for their "Dutch" money? Janzen seems to imply so, for he says in his continuation of the above passage:

... How happy we were when we finally learned that Minister Dobrovolsky would graciously accept our *hundred thousands*. Whether that was really true, one does not know, but that is what we heard and we breathed easier. "Alas," that the government was then so near its end that we never had the opportunity to experience Dobrovolsky's generosity.<sup>90</sup>

From what Janzen says about bribing Russian officials it is evident that not even he knew if it had succeeded – or whether it had even taken

place. H. J. Braun, who was in a position to know, himself said: "I myself was the plenipotentiary for the group of landowners from the Melitopol District until the collapse of the temporary government [October, 1917] **and know what happened** [my emphasis]." Yet he has not told us.<sup>91</sup> Only the anonymous document that confirms Braun as the plenipotentiary of the Melitopol landowners speaks of the wealthy Mennonite volost governments supplying Braun with money in St. Petersburg. Such a statement could be read as lending credence to Janzen's assertion.

But Braun was not only in St. Petersburg to bribe government officials, if indeed that was what he did; he was there to do everything in his power to keep the liquidation laws from being implemented in the Mennonite communities back home. He may well have originated the "Dutch argument" at the outset of the war; *Novoe Vremia* singled him out as its greatest advocate. Therefore he must surely have become more and more concerned when, in late 1916, he became aware that the government was planning a third liquidation law, this one the most draconian of all. That law was approved on 6 February, 1917 and would have "obliterated all German and Mennonite landholding if enacted."<sup>92</sup> Why, one may well ask, would the government continue to grant the Mennonites exemption from military service if they intended to dispossess them and deport them to Siberia?

According to the anonymous author of "The South Russian Mennonites in a Time of War and Revolution," the Mennonites sent a delegation to St. Petersburg in December, 1916; Lindemann, however, argues that it was sent in January, 1917.<sup>93</sup> Its purpose, according to the latter, was to attempt to forestall the consequences of the new law in their communities. Their delegates supposedly engaged the assistance of a Russian lawyer who had a reputation for being able to persuade government officials. When the delegates returned home with their work unfinished, probably for the Christmas holidays (I therefore think Lindemann's date is wrong), the lawyer, according to some reports, took matters into his own hands and drafted a petition to the Tsar on his own. He got two Mennonites residing in St. Petersburg at the time – as it turns out, H. J. Braun and a Johann Thiessen<sup>94</sup> – to sign the document. Whether they knew what it contained is in dispute. As it turned out, however, the language used in the petition was extreme, at least so Benjamin Unruh asserted time and again. It contained, he said, the following statements: first, that "not a drop of German blood flows in our [the Mennonites'] veins," and second, "We repudiate everything Germanic."<sup>95</sup>

In his description of what occurred in the matter of this submission to the Tsar, Lindemann makes it appear as though Braun and Thiessen were caught off guard by the Russian lawyer hired to draw up the doc-

ument. The lawyer's name was Timofeev,<sup>96</sup> about whom the documents have remained silent. In a letter to B. B. Janz, dated 14 May, 1922, however, Benjamin Unruh placed the blame for what happened squarely on the shoulders of Braun and Thiessen, saying: "People in Germany are well informed about the notorious petition [to the Tsar] of Braun and Thiessen during the period of the liquidation laws . . . That submission was an unforgivable transgression of their jurisdiction, the consequences of which are not yet fully known . . ." <sup>97</sup> The Nazi sympathizer, Heinrich H. Schroeder, in his 1936 *Russlanddeutsche Friesen* (Russian-German Friesens), adds several other dimensions to the discussion of the matter while appearing to support Unruh's charge. For he observes in a footnote, referring to the Mennonites, the liquidation laws, and the "Dutch argument":

A memorandum to the tsarist government expressing this argument [the "Dutch argument"] was prepared in St. Petersburg by the gentlemen Jacob [it should be John] Thiessen and Heinrich Braun with the assistance of the Russian lawyer Timofeev. The declarations in the memorandum were based upon F. Szper's dissertation, "De Nederlandsche Nederzettingen in West-Pruisen . . .," (Enthuizen 1913). Timofeev had allowed himself to insert a vulgar statement against the Germans in the memorandum which caused an outcry in the farming communities of the Russian Friesens.<sup>98</sup>

Both Unruh and Schroeder name Braun and Thiessen as the two Mennonites involved; Lindemann says only that "the two Mennonites were living in St. Petersburg at the time." On the other hand, Lindemann and Schroeder place the greater responsibility for these statements on Timofeev's shoulders, Lindemann arguing that he at least partially deceived Braun and Thiessen in the matter. Unruh seldom if ever does so, most often placing full responsibility on the two Mennonites; with one exception. In a letter to the Dutch Mennonite Dr. S. H. N. Gorter of November, 1927, Unruh wrote:

You have seen quite correctly that the theme of Dutch origins must be carefully handled nowadays. Because of it there have been a great number of attacks upon Mennonite "militarism." During the period of the land liquidation, a number of our people did indeed speak very incautiously, *but only in isolated cases* [my emphasis]. A totally irresponsible memorandum, which the notorious "missionary" Thiessen from Holland, living in St. Petersburg, signed without any authorization and handed in to the Tsar, contained the sentence: "In our veins flows not a drop of German blood! We reject everything Germanic!" – Such a jerk [Rindvieh]. Our farmers banged the tables with their fists.<sup>99</sup>

What is interesting here is that only Johann Thiessen is named. Why not also H. J. Braun?



Even though H. J. Braun has not left us any statements or notes on the subject, we do get some indication of how he viewed this incident from a letter of Benjamin Unruh to Peter J. Braun, Heinrich's younger brother. There, on 28 October, 1926, about a year before his letter to Gorter, Unruh wrote:

Prof. Lindemann was begged – nearly on their knees – by our Ohrloff colleagues not to publish his manuscript with the [Stuttgart] *Auslandsinstitut*. He did so anyway. It was all done in the name of his friendship with your brother and without any critical appraisal.<sup>100</sup> I was a liar, a falsifier; I had concocted the story that Heinrich had had no authority to sign [the document], that he had distorted his name, out of thin air, etc., etc.<sup>101</sup> The explanation of your brother to Lindemann stresses the fact that he worked in the closest cooperation with the delegation. Lindemann accepted that. I sent him [Lindemann] two statements (explanations), the second containing documentary confirmation. In the meantime I have gathered much more documentary evidence and will receive, as I said, the full evidence. It is indisputably proven that Heinrich and Thiessen arrogated to themselves the authority – to be sure with the best of intentions – to sign [the document], and that Heinrich "dutchified" his name. These two factors caused Lindemann to attack me. Now, however, he has recognized his mistakes and written me two friendly letters. In the final analysis he was scholar enough to recognize that his description of events, based on inadequate documentation, was completely wrong. Just imagine, he never even mentioned the delegation in his manuscript. [According to him], Heinrich Braun and Thiessen had been commissioned by Halbstadt and Chortitza respectively; they submitted the memorandum on behalf of the congregations, and the letter was a "document" of our history. And it concludes with the words, that we reject everything Germanic. Why does not Heinrich simply say: Timofeev took us by surprise; that *is* the case, is it not? *I corrected Lindemann's manuscript in this regard* [my emphasis]. And if Lindemann was going to turn to Braun, he [Braun] should first have written me before he answered him [Lindemann]. For already a year ago he promised me a letter. But no letter has arrived. He must have known how I felt about him . . . .<sup>102</sup>

The fact that Unruh could speak so openly to Peter Braun about his brother Heinrich says something very important about the relationship between these two Russian Mennonite leaders. But, perhaps more importantly, it tells us that Lindemann's account, corrected as it was by Unruh,<sup>103</sup> was in reality Unruh's version of the story. At the same time, however, it does confirm a number of facts surrounding this supposedly last submission of the Russian Mennonites to Tsar Nicholas II that might otherwise have remained in dispute. First, there was a delegation sent by the Molotschna and Chortitza colonies to St. Petersburg to seek to dissuade the government from implementing the liquidation laws against them, though Lindemann probably has the date wrong. We are not told, however, who was in the delegation. We know, furthermore, that these delegates engaged a Russian lawyer, Timofeev, to assist them

in formulating and presenting their case. But before the memorandum had been written, the delegation returned home, as we have suggested, for the Christmas holidays; why else would they have cut short such an important mission? We are not told how much work they had accomplished before they left. Would Timofeev then really have taken it upon himself to formulate the document? Or did Braun and Thiessen participate in the formulation? According to Unruh, Braun had apparently told Lindemann that he had worked closely with the delegation during its stay in St. Petersburg. So closely that he thought he knew what their intentions were. If the most draconian version of the liquidation law was in the offing, why would the delegation return home without having completed its mission; because they had left it up to Braun? Or was the document they were formulating a virtual replication of all the other petitions turned in? After all, Braun was the plenipotentiary of the Melitopol landowners, had most probably written the prototype of the thousands of petitions already turned in, and had dealt with government officials any number of times since 1910. And he was still a member of the *KfK*. Perhaps he would have been a member of the delegation had he not been living in exile in St. Petersburg.

In any case, we know that the precise word used by Lindemann to describe what happened between Braun and Timofeev was not his but Unruh's; Lindemann must have explained what happened quite differently. The word Lindemann uses is the German "überrumpeln:" to take by surprise. Unruh uses that precise word in his letter to Peter Braun, and in precisely the same context. But whereas he had inserted it in Lindemann's text as a statement of fact, in his letter to Peter he puts it in the form of a question: "Why does not Heinrich simply say: Timofeev took us by surprise [hat uns überrumpelt]. *That is the case, is it not?*" Unruh may even have suggested to Heinrich that he say so. But, apparently, Heinrich had refused. Why? Probably because it was not true.

In his letter to Peter Braun, Unruh also says that Heinrich accused him of lying, of falsifying the facts. Which facts were these? That Unruh had "concocted out of thin air [the fact] that Heinrich had no authorization to sign [the document]"; secondly, that he had distorted his name. Let us consider these accusations separately. We have seen H. J. Braun assert that he was the plenipotentiary of the Melitopol Mennonite landowners elected at a meeting of landowners some time in early 1915 before he was forced into exile in mid June. We have seen one other anonymous document say precisely the same thing. This anonymous document also asserted that the wealthy Mennonite volost governments had supplied Braun with considerable sums of money (for personal upkeep or for bribing Russian officials is not clear) during his entire stay in St. Petersburg. These volost governments would certainly

not have done so had Braun not been acting for them in some kind of official capacity. On the other hand, since Braun was in St. Petersburg at the time the delegation was elected, he could not have been a member. Looking at the issue of representation from this last perspective, as Unruh clearly did, obviously H. J. Braun was not an elected delegate representing the Mennonite colonies on this particular matter. But, from Braun's perspective, as the elected plenipotentiary of the Melitopol Mennonite landowners, he was indeed authorized to sign documents petitioning the Tsar for exemption in the liquidation matter. If Unruh now, from his perspective, publicly accused Braun of acting without authorization in the matter, the latter would naturally have reacted rather strongly, and to a degree correctly, in asserting that he did have authorization and that Unruh was blatantly lying if he denied it. To a degree, both men would have been right, and to a degree, both wrong. Perhaps Peter wrote him this in answer to his October, 1926 letter and that was why Unruh mentioned only Thiessen in his subsequent letter to Gorter of 1927. But this is only speculation.

According to B. B. Janz's letter of 22 December, 1921 requesting that Russian Mennonites be repatriated to the Netherlands, their "old homeland," the Mennonites' last submission to the Tsar had been successful. He wrote:

Even though we sought diligently and continuously to prove that we were not really German but of Dutch descent, the Russian government refused to believe us. Only on 29 January, 1917 were we enabled by means of a petition directed to the highest echelons of government, handed directly [to the Tsar] through the mediation of a minister, to prevent the liquidation of our mother colonies in the Molotschna and Chortitza Districts, because the Tsar wrote on the petition in his own hand: "The liquidation of Mennonite lands is to be halted immediately until their claim to be of Dutch ancestry has been thoroughly investigated."<sup>104</sup>

This statement would appear to be confirmed by the 7 July, 1920 anonymous article in the *Mennonitische Rundschau* entitled: "Die südrussische Mennoniten in der Krieg und Revolutionszeit," (The South Russian Mennonites during the War and Revolution) and by the footnote in H. H. Schroeder's *Russlanddeutsche Friesen*. In the former, with reference to the land liquidation laws, the author wrote:

The key to the aforementioned [land liquidation] laws was the political German descent. Because of this the Swiss German colonies of the Lutheran faith sought, on the basis of their Swiss origin, to put a stop to the application of the law to their lands; on the basis of this example, the Mennonites, too, who were generally recognized to be of *Dutch descent* [my emphasis], sought to do the same. For this purpose a Mennonite delegation was sent to St. Petersburg in

December, 1916. It possessed very good historical documentation to prove the aforementioned [Dutch] descent of the Mennonites [probably Epp and Bergmann's pamphlet]. A memorandum to this effect was drawn up and submitted to the various ministries as well as the Duma, without achieving any direct result however. A direct petition to the Tsar was the only avenue left us; [such a petition] was submitted and appeared about to be crowned with success when, in the end of February, the revolution broke out.<sup>105</sup>

This anonymous writer appears to indicate that the December, 1916 delegation and its petition, formulated by Timofeev and signed by Braun and Thiessen, failed to achieve its goal and that it was a later "direct petition" to the Tsar that brought success, a petition submitted sometime in January, 1917. Were they one and the same? Nearly everyone seems to have assumed so. If not, then Braun and Thiessen's version was not involved in the outcome and their "exaggerations" of little consequence.

There is no evidence that indicates the extent to which word of the pending success of the January, 1917 personal petition submitted directly to the Tsar became known among Russian Mennonites back in the colonies. B. B. Janz's statement, Schroeder's footnote, and the above assertion are the only three references I have found to such a possible success. If B. H. Unruh knew that the petition had succeeded, and he should have, given his close relations during the early 1920s with B. B. Janz, he may have been galled even more. I have, however, found no overt remark in any of his writings to indicate that he knew of it.

Something else may have entered into the conflict. Thirty years later Unruh could still not forget that H. J. Braun had not consulted him when the original "Dutch argument" was first formulated and employed. Did he have a right to be consulted? True, he was beginning to play a more prominent public role in Mennonite, indeed inter-Mennonite affairs; and by 1917 he was elected to represent the Molotschna Mennonites at the Congress of Germans in Russia meeting in Moscow in April, shortly after the fall of the tsarist regime. But then, H. J. Braun was not in Halbstadt in early 1917, nor had he been since June, 1915. Unruh may therefore have moved into the vacuum. When Braun returned, Unruh may have felt threatened, for Braun, as Epp had said, always represented the MBs to the outside world. It is clear that Unruh wished Braun neutralized later on in Germany when H. J. Braun arrived there in spring of 1922, once again as plenipotentiary, this time of some one hundred Russian Mennonite families who had enlisted him to bring them out of Russia.<sup>106</sup> When Braun arrived in Germany and consulted with Benjamin Unruh, the member of the *Studienkommission* in Germany, the latter sought to shunt him aside, writing to A. A. Friesen in Canada: ". . . I agree with you that he [Braun] must recede

into the background as much as possible."<sup>107</sup> Here Braun appeared to be treading on Unruh's turf, and the younger man was just a little too protective. The same can be seen later, in 1924, when Braun made a trip to South America at his own expense to spy out the land for Mennonite settlement.<sup>108</sup>

At the same time, Braun never conceded to Unruh that Timofeev had taken him by surprise. Indeed, it is hard to imagine that a man of Braun's stature and experience would have been *überrumpelt* by the Russian lawyer. I find it much more plausible to believe that Braun was actively involved with the Russian lawyer in formulating the document, for we have seen nearly similar statements to those reported to have been in the document used by Mennonite medics and embedded in the 1915 and 1916 petitions, probably formulated by Braun, submitted directly to the Tsar. Thus, the writer of the 4 October, 1914 article entitled "Forest People" in the *Press Review* stated specifically that the Mennonite medics had told him that they were Dutchmen and renounced any connection to Germany. The infamous statement in the memorandum to the Tsar had been, according to Unruh: "Wir sagen uns los von allem Deutschtum" (we renounce everything Germanic). Given the fact that the phrase was used earlier specifically and implied in virtually every document dealing with the issue, we should not, with Unruh, find the 1917 statement so outrageous, especially given the threatening context of the liquidation laws. The other statement – "that not a drop of German blood flows in our veins" – was perhaps somewhat extreme especially since earlier statements had always argued that Mennonites were *predominantly* of Dutch extraction.<sup>109</sup> On the other hand, the petitions did state that no German blood flowed in Mennonite veins. Therefore, given the context of early 1917 with the most draconian version of the liquidation law about to descend upon them, and everything else having failed, including bribery where it was attempted, would one not have been tempted to use a "little" hyperbole? We must remember that even after the Romanov dynasty had fallen, at the April, 1917 Congress of Germans in Russia meeting in Moscow, it was H. J. Braun, the guest but still the plenipotentiary of the Melitopol land owners, who nearly scuttled the attempts at cooperation between German and Mennonite colonists when he objected to the Mennonites being included among the "Russian citizens of German descent." Braun had taken the floor and told the gathering: "Mennonites cannot sign such a document. They are Dutch."<sup>110</sup> At this point the Provisional Government had not yet rescinded the liquidation laws, nor would it before it fell. If Braun could make such a categorical statement at a congress of Mennonite and German colonists in Russia seeking to fashion some form of cooperation between them, then surely he

could have given his consent to the statements in the vaunted December, 1916 memorandum under much more perilous conditions. That is probably why he refused to concede that Timofeev had taken him by surprise. And if this interpretation comes close to the truth, there is no reason to assume that he did not also transform his name into Dutch.

This was the form the controversy took within the Mennonite colonies after the danger of land liquidation had passed and in the later literature. But is there any way to know what actually took place in Petrograd between the Mennonite delegates and the authorities of a collapsing Romanov dynasty whose ministers, largely at the urging of a Rasputin upon a gullible Tsarina, were being shuffled in and out of office on a nearly fortnightly basis? Is there any historical evidence available to us on whose basis we can separate truth from fiction and accusation? The St. Petersburg archives do contain some documents that might help us, documents none of the above persons had access to. And these documents demonstrate conclusively that it was not the petition drawn up by Timofeev and signed by Braun and Thiessen that saved the day for the Mennonites, but another one. Had Mennonites back home known this, would they have attacked Braun and Thiessen so severely upon their return from their exile in St. Petersburg? And would Benjamin Unruh, who claimed to know more about this incident than anyone else, have returned to it at every opportunity in order to condemn both Braun and Thiessen?

Dobrovolsky, the Minister of Justice reputed to have accepted the bribes from the Mennonite delegates, was apparently appointed to his position on 16 December, 1916, the very day Rasputin was murdered.<sup>111</sup> Recommended by Rasputin and promoted by the Tsarina, Dobrovolsky, in a previous incarnation, had been inspector of schools in Tsarskoe Selo and then one of Rasputin's "secretaries" through whom petitioners gained access to the infamous peasant influence-peddler by paying substantial bribes.<sup>112</sup> Bernard Pares tells us, further, that Dobrovolsky was heavily indebted to Simanovich, another of Rasputin's "secretaries."<sup>113</sup> Would such a man as Minister of Justice, even Minister of Justice in a disintegrating administration, have accepted bribes from Mennonite delegates? To ask the question is already to answer it.

Could Mennonites have come to know Dobrovolsky already before he became Minister of Justice when (or, perhaps better, if) they had attempted to petition the Tsar and Tsarina through Rasputin? B. B. Wiens, a close friend of Peter Braun, would write later that when all appeals to Petrograd appeared to have failed, Mennonites had contemplated appealing to the all-powerful Rasputin.<sup>114</sup> Whatever the case, we do know that it was indeed Dobrovolsky who, as Minister of Justice, took a Mennonite petition dated 17 January, 1917 to the Tsar on the 19<sup>th</sup>

of the month. For on the next day, Count Golitsyn, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, wrote to Protopopov,<sup>115</sup> with copies sent to Nikolainko and Stishinsky:

The head of the Ministry of Justice [Dobrovolsky] reported to the Council of Ministers that His Imperial Majesty, according to the report of Senator Dobrovolsky, decided on 19 January, 1917 that, 1) all public auctions of Mennonite estates in Ekaterinoslav and Taurida gubernii be halted, and 2) that the petition of the Mennonites be transferred to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers who is to form an inter-departmental commission to examine the accuracy of the Mennonite claim to be of Dutch origin and submit their case to a thorough review.<sup>116</sup>

Golitsyn's memo was meant to inform them of this "Imperial resolution." All necessary decisions to form such a commission, he continued, would be taken.<sup>117</sup>

The next day, 21 January, 1917, Golitsyn took a virtually identical memorandum to the Tsar at Tsarskoe Selo for his consideration. He informed the Tsar at his audience that the Council of Ministers had instructed the Ministers of Internal Affairs and Finance to discontinue all sales of Mennonite estates in the above-named gubernii. But rather than follow Dobrovolsky's recommendation to create an inter-departmental commission to investigate the Mennonite claim, Golitsyn wrote the Tsar:

With regard to the review of this case and the examination of the accuracy of the [Mennonite] claims, the task ought to be transferred to the Special Committee for the Fight against German Oppression, headed by Stishinsky. It is in this committee that the interests of all departments are already represented. After the decision on this matter is reached by the Committee it is to be forwarded to the Council of Ministers for review, and after that to His Majesty for approval.<sup>118</sup>

This document was approved by the personal signature of the Tsar on 21 January, 1917.

The day following, 22 January, Golitsyn informed Protopopov, Nikolainko, Stishinsky and Dobrovolsky that the Emperor had received his report on the 21<sup>st</sup> and issued the following resolution to the Prime Minister:

To review the case of the liquidation of Mennonite estates in the Ekaterinoslav and Taurida gubernii and examine the accuracy of the information contained in their petition about their Dutch origin. This work is to be headed by the Member of the State Council Stishinsky, who chairs a Special Committee for the Fight against German Oppression.

Then follows the statement that the committee's findings are to be for-

warded to the Council of Ministers, and ultimately to the Tsar, for final approval.<sup>119</sup>

A subsequent note from Lodyzhinsky, Director of the "Affairs of the Council of Ministers," to Stishinsky of 24 January, 1917, was accompanied by a copy of Golitsyn's 22 January memo to the Council of Ministers, "No. 816 regarding the Monarch's will on the matter [dealt with] on 21 January concerning the review of the case of the Mennonites of Ekaterinoslav and Taurida gubernii," and "a copy of the Mennonites' petition of 17 January, 1917."<sup>120</sup>

What is now surprising is the fact that the Mennonite petition of 17 January, 1917 contained in this collection of documents is a virtual verbatim replication of the thousands of petitions sent to St. Petersburg in July/August of 1915 and 1916. Furthermore, according to David Rempel, this last petition was not submitted by Braun and Thiessen at all, but by a Jacob Niebuhr and a Cornelius Hiebert who "lobbied effectively with Rodzianko, the President of the State Duma, who they hoped would influence the Minister of Justice, Dobrovolsky." The two even telegraphed home stating "that the operation had been successful. They requested 100,000 rubles, of which 10,000 was to go to Dobrovolsky immediately."<sup>121</sup> The remainder was to be delivered once a favorable decision had been approved. If Rempel is correct, could Braun and Thiessen have had anything to do with the ultimate resolution of the problem?

The petition Niebuhr and Hiebert submitted was therefore the same one that had been submitted from the beginning. And the offending line, at least from Benjamin Unruh's point of view, was the same in this petition as it had been in the petitions of 1915: "Therefore there is no German blood in the Mennonites."<sup>122</sup> It is hard to believe that Unruh had not seen this document much earlier, for that line had been present from the beginning and it was, in all probability, Heinrich Braun's line. Unruh's touted lawyer, Timofeev, cannot have played any role at all in formulating this petition since it had been around since the summer of 1915. The only difference between this submission and the earlier ones was Dobrovolsky's involvement, for he was not only willing to accept the Mennonite bribes but, as Minister of Justice, also had direct access to the Tsar. It was his intervention with the Tsar that put the process in motion, for on 20 January, 1917 Dobrovolsky brought the Tsar's message to the Council of Ministers, that the Tsar "willed all public auctions of Mennonite estates in Ekaterinoslav and Taurida gubernii to be halted immediately," and that claims in the Mennonite petition "be investigated."<sup>123</sup> However, before these claims could be investigated by Stishinsky's committee, the Romanov dynasty had collapsed and been replaced by the Provisional Government.

According to all three – Unruh, Lindemann and Schroeder – the



home congregations, when news of the memorandum's contents began to filter through to them, pounded the tables in anger. They even called Braun and Thiessen to account, not so much for their "Dutch argument" or extreme statements, but because they had acted without congregational authorization. However, no one tells us precisely when such a meeting, or meetings, took place. Corrected by Unruh Lindemann writes:

Rumors concerning the text of the petition gradually surfaced in the settlements and occasioned a furious indignation. One of the signatories was called to account at a public meeting in Halbstadt (on the occasion of a meeting of *Forstei* delegates). He openly declared what had happened, and the majority gained the impression that the guile of the lawyer had been greater than a certain naiveté on the part of the two Mennonites. The latter had nevertheless sinned against a strict congregational principle. They had made themselves into representatives of the Mennonites in economic matters without a commission, a mandate . . . .<sup>124</sup>

Who was this man? It would appear to have been Braun, for he was from Halbstadt. But if it was Braun, then the meeting could not have taken place before his return from St. Petersburg. According to his own testimony, Braun did not return home until late April or early May, 1917, well after the meeting of the Congress of Germans in Russia in April. It may even have been later than May.<sup>125</sup> Perhaps Braun was chastised at that meeting for speaking out at the Moscow congress, where he was not a delegate and had no specific authorization. Perhaps the two events were conflated. To be sure, Braun had not had a particular authorization in December, 1916 to act on behalf of the Mennonite congregations. On the other hand, if he, Thiessen and Timofeev did indeed write a separate document, it quite apparently played no role in the outcome of the matter. Nor, thus far, has it been located in the St. Petersburg archives.

One other factor must be considered. If Braun was the man in the hot seat, the meeting in question can only have taken place after the collapse of the tsarist regime. Suddenly, the liquidation laws were no longer a threat, although the Provisional Government did not abolish them, but merely put them in abeyance. Nonetheless, Mennonites were granted a reprieve. And if, as it must have if Braun was present, that meeting took place after the April Congress of Germans in Russia where a united front of all the colonists was seen as a dire necessity (Mennonites having finally learned the lesson of the "shrewd steward"); and if Braun's remark at that congress, which flew in the face of such unity, was known to everyone; then the chastisement of Braun, if it was he, takes on a somewhat different character. For there must have been a

good number of Russian Mennonites (and this is made apparent in the discussion of the Dutch/German issue after the war) who probably never liked the "Dutch argument"; who had little historical memory and thought the argument "opportunistic"; who prided themselves, especially after the success of the German armies against Russia, in being German; and who may have been lying in wait for an opportunity to attack Braun as the architect of the argument. Benjamin H. Unruh was one such opponent as we shall see. Was he the one to raise the issue at the meeting of the *Forstei* delegates?

In light of the some 6,500 petitions sent in to the government in 1915 and 1916, all with the "offending" passages in them, as did the successful petition of January, 1917, I find it hard to believe that such a confrontation could have taken place in Halbstadt, especially in light of the following statement recorded by Peter J. Dyck in his diary for 3 March, 1916:

Today at the Schulzenbott, a sample petition was read. Each individual is to hand in his petition to His Majesty, the Emperor, in regard to the land requisition and expropriation of their homes. In this we are to state that we are actually not German, but Dutch, and that the Boers in Africa are our Rodneje Bratje (true brothers). There is a fair amount of self-praise in the petition. It also seems problematical to have each Mennonite present his own petition. We really seem to lack faith in God, as Pastor Kügelgen is to have said in Petrograd. The other Germans, who also wish to remain German, and are not suddenly turning into Dutchmen, are, I believe, not working nearly as hard as the Mennonites. Nor are they spending as much money. Nothing more will happen to them than will happen to us Mennonites.<sup>126</sup>

The above took place in Halbstadt. Quite apparently, therefore, the 1916 petitions which were virtually identical to those of 1915 (and to the one of 1917) had the official backing of the "Halbstadt Volost Government," to use David Rempel's term. Because of this everyone must have known that these petitions all contained the offending passages, though perhaps with very minor differences, that the supposed submission of December, 1916 contained. Even Unruh must have known it. If this was the case, and if the confrontational meeting in Halbstadt did take place in 1917 as recounted by Lindemann, Schroeder and Unruh, then one can only conclude that hypocrisy with respect to their ethnic origins had run amuck among the Russian Mennonites immediately the war had ended.

## “We Hate and Loathe this People”

*Our oppression began with the inception of the bloody European war. The Russian press immediately attacked us, maligning us as agents of an aggressive Germany. Not only did they prohibit us from speaking German, but also from preaching in our mother tongue. That struck at the very root of our church services. Given the administrative conditions in old Russia, this directive – to be sure – was not uniformly enforced. However, the order that not more than two men were to gather in any home at one time severely curtailed our civil rights. Naturally, the German press was also forbidden. But what wounded us most profoundly because of their notorious injustice were the land liquidation laws of 2 February and 12 December, 1915, directed at our ownership of land. They wanted to throw us onto the street, make us homeless paupers, transform us into slaves; this would have entailed the religious-moral, as well as material, disintegration of our children . . .*

The *Studienkommission* to the General Conference of Mennonites in America, 18 January, 1920

We have spent considerable time dealing with the December 1916/January, 1917 petitions for one simple reason: if it had not been for the controversy generated by the purported December, 1916 memorandum to Nicholas II on the liquidation laws, there probably would have been very little, if any, further discussion of the “Dutch theory” after the war. As it was, however, Unruh, who appears to have been the fiercest and most articulate opponent of the theory, decided – in response to Braun’s statement at the Congress of Germans in Russia – to investigate the question of Dutch origins from a “scholarly” perspective and resolve the matter once and for all. He wrote in his 1951 autobiography:

... I have dealt with the question of [Russian Mennonite] origins *academically* and thoroughly in my study “The Dutch-Low German Backgrounds of the Eastward Migration of Mennonites in the 16<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries.” The determination to tackle such a study was born at the Congress in Moscow (April, 1917). Our brotherhood should make it possible for the work to appear [it did so in 1955, four years later]. People are awaiting the investigation above all also in non-Mennonite circles. We should wish to demonstrate to the world that we are not only formidable colonizers, earnest reform-minded Christians, peace-loving people, but that we are also reputable scholars!<sup>1</sup>

Clearly, the idea for Unruh’s *magnum opus* was born in a highly politicized and contentious moment. Were its conclusions foreordained,

especially since Unruh moved to Germany in 1920 and during the 1930s became an apologist for Hitler's Nazi Germany? The next chapter shall tell. Here, in this chapter we must return to the Russian Mennonites' reaction to their treatment at the hands of the Russian government during the war years, and in the next chapter to a discussion of A. A. Friesen's "Betrachtungen" in which he addressed the issue of Mennonite isolation and the role it played in the land liquidation crisis during the war.

In his *Mein Leben hat ein Ziel* (My Life has a Goal), Johannes Schleuning, who later wrote a brief, laudatory biography of Benjamin Unruh, spoke of his encounter with a high ranking official from the Russian Ministry of Agriculture on a train trip from Tiflis to Moscow early in the war before anyone had so much as heard of the possibility of any land liquidation laws. As the train rolled through a part of the country inhabited by some half million German colonists who had transformed the steppes into a lush agricultural region, the official, not knowing who Schleuning was, turned to him and said:

All this, with one stroke of the pen, will now belong to us. Riches worth billions will fall to us through decrees being prepared at the highest levels; for these Germans will be driven from their lands, and then we will settle our returning, victorious veterans on them . . . Don't you know that every German in Russia is a spy, and that these people received funds from the German government to establish their colonies, that they have their own bank in Berlin to extend credit to them, that every German village [in Russia] is a strategic point for Kaiser Wilhelm, that they possess a dual citizenship making them subjects in Russia and also Germany? It is only right that we dispossess these spies of their homes and property.<sup>2</sup>

Was this land, taken from German and Mennonite colonists, to go to "returning victorious veterans" as rewards for their sacrifices in the war, or were these laws a ploy by the noble landowners, in collusion with the government, to divert peasant land-hunger from themselves? At what point did the government turn to such an expedient, whatever the reasons? Did it have anything to do with Russia's early fortunes/misfortunes in the war? For example, her failure to take advantage of the victory at Gumbinnen and march on Berlin, shortly to be followed by Russia's disastrous defeat at Tannenberg as early as 26-30 August, 1914? Gradually forced to retreat, within ten months Russia had lost some 3,800,000 men. It was on the heels of this retreat that Internal Affairs Minister Makarov ordered the evacuation of all persons of German extraction within 100 to 150 kilometers behind the shifting front. But by removing these German farmers from their lands the Russian government was adding economic problems to its already serious military

problems; for its policy led to a shortage of foodstuffs. As Karl Lindemann warned government officials, such a policy would prove to be both an agricultural and economic disaster. And so it was. Were these German colonists so unreliable that they had to be removed? Did they not serve their adopted country both inside and outside the armed forces as well, if not better than, the native Russians themselves? Throughout the war, as Lindemann then and historians since have pointed out, not one colonist was tried either for espionage or treason. Why then did the government adopt such draconian measures?

There can be little doubt that the attacks on Germans inside Russia by ardent nationalists since the mid nineteenth century made the adoption of these measures much easier. A. A. Friesen even called the liquidation laws the logical extension of the government's policy to integrate the colonists into Russian society, a policy the colonists (Mennonites more so than others) had resisted with all their power. Indeed, as we have seen, the arguments of the nationalists were reflected in the government's preamble to the liquidation law submitted to the Duma on 9 October, 1914, as they were in the words spoken by the Ministry of Agriculture official to Johannes Schleuning. In time of peace, the Russian government had been more reluctant to lend its voice to such rhetoric; in time of war, when the enemy was an internal minority's country of origin, such reluctance could be thrown to the wind. The internment of Japanese-Americans in the United States during World War II is simply another example of this phenomenon. Americans of German descent were treated nearly as badly. There is therefore little reason to single out the actions of the Russian government during World War I, no matter how reprehensible, in this regard. On the other hand, the Russian government knew full well – and had this repeatedly confirmed during the war – that these German colonists were more loyal to the motherland than Russia's own native sons. And well they should have been since theirs was a most precarious position. Mennonites in both the Molotschna and Chortitza colonies recognized this immediately when war was declared on Austria. That is why they hurried to volunteer for service in the medical corps and why Peter Braun thought it imperative to make the case for Mennonite loyalty through the years.

On the other hand, governments during wartime have a tendency to capitulate to the most strident of internal voices. It is clear that the Russian government did so in the above instance. Would it have acted in a similar manner had there been no war? And what did it hope to achieve from such action? Divert attention from its disastrous conduct of the war by throwing some sacrificial lambs to appease the rapacious land-hungry wolves? Divert attention from the noble landowners to the lands of the

German colonists? Whatever the case, the war provided a cover for doing what it probably would not have dared under normal conditions.

Of all the later Mennonite responses to these land liquidation laws, only Benjamin Unruh and A. A. Friesen sought to understand why and what had happened. Unruh wrote about it in a number of published pieces; A. A. Friesen's response still exists only in manuscript form. Unruh approached the problem from a much narrower perspective than the economist, A. A. Friesen, however. In his opinion the land liquidation laws had to do primarily with the Russian peasant's land hunger and Stolypin's land reforms of 1906 which were designed to enlist the peasant in the government's war against the revolutionaries. These reforms had sought to free the Russian peasant from the *mir* and enable him to acquire private property by permitting him to claim his share of the *mir* and possess it in one parcel rather than in strips scattered throughout the village. Shortcomings in Stolypin's first law of 1906 were corrected and the scope of the reform extended by the Third Duma. Thereafter, when a two-thirds majority of a *mir's* inhabitants so desired, members would be given their allotment of land in one plot and receive title to it. Between 1906 and 1914 almost six million of a total of twelve million peasant families petitioned for such a change. By 1915 roughly four to six million had received their allotments in this fashion.<sup>3</sup>

According to Benjamin Unruh, however, these reforms had led primarily to the aggrandizement of the more powerful peasants in the *mir* at the expense of others, creating a village proletariat. When the war therefore broke out, Russian authorities were faced with a largely embittered peasantry, many of whom were worse off than they had been before. Consequently, they looked, as they had done repeatedly in the past, to the landed estates of the Russian nobility for redress. When the war broke out, therefore, the nobles had the assistance of the government to seize the opportunity to attempt to deflect this land hunger away from themselves to the wealthy German colonists who were now, in any case, the internal enemies of the country.<sup>4</sup>

Although Russian Mennonites may not immediately have divined the government's motives behind the land liquidation laws, they were well aware that, at least since 1908 and the reaction against the October, 1905 Manifesto, authorities in St. Petersburg had been attempting to restrict their rights. There had been, first of all, the attempt to downgrade their religious status from that of a denomination to that of a sect. Gradually they also came to suspect that the reason behind this attempt was the abolition of their military exemption, an exemption the government had sought to rescind, in one fashion or another, at least since 1873. In 1910 a first version of the land law against German colonists had been floated in the Duma, but rejected and then withdrawn. Nearly

immediately after the war broke out the use of the German language was proscribed in the press, ordinary conversation, and church services. The attack by ardent nationalists, already considerable and increasing prior to the war, exploded with the war's inception. Mennonites, who had ignored these attacks before the war, could no longer do so once war broke out. But they could not defend themselves in public either, for the Russian press refused to accept their rejoinders and their own publications had been closed down. The only avenue left to them was the occasional pamphlet, but this too had to pass muster by the military censors. Hence Peter Braun's pamphlet printed by Raduga in two separate editions, and Epp and Bergmann's 1915 pamphlet printed in Petrograd (perhaps through the good offices of Karl Lindemann). But nothing prepared them for the unconscionable way in which the government turned on them in the land liquidation laws of February and December, 1915. It was one thing to limit the Mennonites in their civil and religious freedoms, quite another to drive them from their lands.

If the Russian peasant lost his faith in the Tsar during the 1905 revolution, the Mennonites lost theirs with the promulgation of the liquidation laws. They believed the laws unjust because they had met, according to their interpretation, all the conditions of their entry into the country. They had repeatedly proven their loyalty to Tsar and fatherland, and they continued to do so even after the liquidation laws were passed.<sup>5</sup> In the aftermath of the war, the action of the provisional government in not rescinding these laws; the draconian measures of the Communists after the October Revolution; the vicious attacks of the Makhno anarchists; and, finally, the coming of the CHEKA in 1921<sup>6</sup> – all added to the fuel of Mennonite disillusionment, resentment, and growing hatred of Russia. To be sure, the hated Tsarist government was gone, but had it not, in its callous and perfidious disregard of basic human rights and its accusations leveled against the Germans and Mennonites in both the public press and the preamble to its liquidation laws, set the stage for the expression of hatred toward aliens in all segments of Russian society? Fueled by war hysteria, greed, calumny, and the government's own perverse actions, nearly every Russian felt justified in making the "German" foreigners the object of their frustration and hatred. H. J. Braun, writing to a friend in Canada from Constantinople on 22 March, 1922, observed: "The nationalistic hatred has not abated; it sticks even in 8 to 10 year old boys." He continued:

I am instructed to inform you and the American Commission of Immigration as to the feeling of our people in Russia. First of all I must say that **all Mennonites of Russia:** those at the Molotschna, at the Crimea, the colonies of Chortiza, Memrik, Ignatjevka, Cuban, Ufa, Orenburg, Siberia (I do not know

about Sagradovka) would like to get out of Russia as quickly as possible. They are just craving for an early emigration; for it has become a settled conviction with us that we, no matter what may happen, cannot stay in Russia.<sup>8</sup>

In virtually every document from the period dealing with the Russian Mennonites' desire to emigrate, the litany of troubles invariably begins with the restriction of their civil rights and the land liquidation laws. The latter, however, and particularly the manner in which they were implemented, as A. A. Friesen observed, "surprised, confused and disconcerted the vast majority of our people." They perceived all these measures as unjust. "Feelings of indignation arose," he continued, "and the injustices became the occasion for renewed desires to emigrate." The *Studienkommission*, in its message to the General Conference of Mennonites in America of 18 January, 1920, singled out the same things.

Our oppression began," they said, "with the inception of the bloody European war. The Russian press immediately attacked us, maligning us as agents of an aggressive Germany. Not only did they prohibit us from speaking German, but also from preaching in our mother tongue. That struck at the very root of our church services. Given the administrative conditions in old Russia, this directive – to be sure – was not uniformly enforced. However, the order that not more than two men were to gather in any home at one time severely curtailed our civil rights. Naturally, the German press was also forbidden. But what wounded us most profoundly because of their notorious injustice were the liquidation laws of 2 February and 12 December, 1915, directed at our ownership of land. They wanted to throw us onto the street, make us homeless paupers, transform us into slaves; this would have entailed the religious-moral, as well as material, disintegration of our children . . . ."<sup>9</sup>

How deeply this "insult burned in the souls of the colonists," Unruh wrote in 1930, could be seen in the words of an "intelligent colonist" of a few years earlier. He had written: "Russia has proven herself to be an evil stepmother who desires to destroy her step-children in order to secure their inheritance for her legitimate children. We no longer have a fatherland . . . ." <sup>10</sup> As Unruh knew only too well, these were words Peter Braun had written in his 1922 "Why Emigrate?" Perhaps Braun was more wounded than most Russian Mennonites; he had also probably loved Russia and its literary culture more than most.

But land liquidation had only been the beginning of Mennonite travail in Russia. Not only were other indignities and atrocities heaped upon them by the Makhno bandits and the Communists, but by the Russian people generally. As a result, Peter Braun argued, Mennonites had begun to respond with a hatred of their own, a hatred for the Russian which now resided deep within their soul. It was a mutual hatred like that between the Germans and the French, the Germans and the Poles.



How had this come about, he asked? In order to answer that question, Braun argued, one had to go back in history. And he did, explaining,

We have not understood how to reconcile our neighbors to our presence [in their land]. All the hatred they have accumulated over the years has finally come to a head. If we did not know the Russian people before, we have now gotten to know them fully, but from a perspective we had not anticipated. The events of recent years have led us to see our oppressor, our tyrant, our enemy, in every Russian – to be sure not in every individual person, but in every representative of the nation. The very sight of them arouses our passion, for they are the ones who destroyed our houses and possessions, laid waste our fields, destroyed our forests, who robbed us blind, cursed and humiliated us, made us poor and wretched, who maltreated and raped our mothers, wives, sisters and daughters, who murdered our fathers, brothers and sons like dogs, indeed worse than dogs and in the most despicable manner possible, destroying the flower of our people in the process. They are the ones who brought us to the brink of destruction, who have conjured up want and hunger, misery and grief, and who continue to poison our sons, seduce our daughters and infect our families. We hate and loathe this people for it has devoured our sheep and cattle, continues to steal our bread, drives us from hearth and home wishing to be rid of us, callously and heartlessly abandoning us to misery and a death by starvation. Had not our foreign brothers in the faith come and taken pity on us we would surely not be alive today – to the great satisfaction of our oppressor. How (after all this) are we ever again to enter into an ethical, friendly relationship with this people, something that is absolutely essential if we are to co-exist? What hope is there of an accommodation, a reconciliation? How shall we remain citizens of a land we can only curse? In my opinion, that is totally impossible; even though an individual, highly moral person might be able to carry it off, the great mass of the people cannot do so. For it is impossible to effect such a transformation in mass psychology. And even if it were possible, our continued stay in this land would be tantamount to our moral destruction, for the definitive end of our seclusion and isolation is at hand. We would therefore be unable to resist the disintegrating influences from without. Separation would be our only salvation.<sup>11</sup>

Little wonder that Benjamin Unruh said of Braun and this piece: "... when, in 1921, leading Molotschna Russian Mennonites provided written arguments on the question, whether or not to emigrate from their beloved homeland, it was the Halbstadt Seminar director who advocated it most passionately. One would not have expected that this well-balanced man and Christian would have given vent to his disappointment, to an aggrieved love of homeland in his memorandum in such an undisguised manner."<sup>12</sup> If Peter Braun the scholar could feel this way, how must the ordinary Mennonite have felt?

As Kharusin, the Russian Assistant Minister of Internal Affairs had told Mennonite representatives in 1910: "The time of your isolation is, once and for all, over." Peter Braun recognized this in the above document. Nonetheless, immediately the Romanov dynasty had fallen, Russian Mennonites once more attempted to regain control over their

own schools, as Peter Braun himself wrote in a brief description of the Molotschna *Lehrer Seminar* of 1922. There he remarked:

Earlier all subjects, except German and religion, had been taught in the Russian language, even the leadership of the institution was in Russian hands since 1896. Since 1917, however, the leadership of the institution is once again in German hands; at present all teachers are also German, indeed, Mennonites. This has the advantage that the work in the seminar has a common orientation and can be carried out in a Mennonite spirit. A certain isolation was also achieved through this, and that was necessary, for only in this manner was it possible to uphold the old traditions, that is, to reestablish them and to protect the institution from the powerful infiltration of the spirit of the times.<sup>13</sup>

Lenin tolerated such local control in the schools for a time, but the isolation of the Mennonite villages was to be forever destroyed by resettlement policies described by H. J. Braun in his report sent to Canada and the United States from Constantinople in March of 1922.

The Russian peasant," he wrote, "is pressing for our lands. Last August our authorized representative, B. Janz, brought a letter with him from Kharkov which stated that the Mennonites should retain possession of their lands. He had hardly left to return to Kharkov in September when the Kombedchiki (committee concerned with the poor) from Petropavlovka appeared in Kuruschan, threw the landowners there out of their homes and moved in themselves. Our people were only allowed to take their clothes, underwear and bedding with them. Living and dead inventory plus furniture had to remain.

At the time of my departure [9 January, 1922], the Kombedchiki arrived from Gross Tokmak, threw the Petropavlovkaers out and moved into the farms themselves.

The government of our province is considering three plans which the Russian peasantry has proposed for appropriating the Molotschna colony.

One plan is as follows: – Along with the undivided colony lands a strip shall be taken from the villages of Halbstadt, Muntau, Tiegerweide and others, and on this land five Russian villages shall be planted, just between the two tiers of the above named villages. They would deal with the other villages in a similar manner.

Another plan is this: – A strip of land will be taken between the villages Tiegerweide and Rosenort, between Gnadenfeld and Friedensdorf, between Lindenau and Lichtenau, etc., and there Russian villages will be built with the material obtained by tearing down our big barns and outbuildings.

The third plan is this: – The Mennonite farmers of the villages commencing with Schönau and continuing to Altona, those from Fürstenau to Wernersdorf, from Hamberg to Klippenfeld will leave their homes, taking only their clothes, linens, bedding and some furniture with them. These will be distributed throughout the rest of the other Mennonite villages. Landless Russian peasants with their inventory will move into our vacated villages. In this fashion they intend to destroy all our villages.<sup>14</sup>

Not only was their isolation at an end, their systematic destruction had begun.

## “A Nation State simply will not Tolerate Ethnic Minorities”

*It therefore seems to me that the only path we can take – should we stay in Russia – is the following: that we, that is our best people, recognize with great clarity and strive to appropriate or make our own the nation's highest ideals, that we make the highest interests of the state and nation our own, and that we strive to become citizens of the first order. All particularistic endeavors of a narrowly nationalistic nature, whether **monish** [Mennonite] or German, have to be reduced to the rank of second importance. Nor will we any longer be able to be wholly a-political. It would also be my desire that the new government – hopefully a truly democratic one – would treat the question of nonresistance on a purely individual basis, as does the USA. Were that to happen, we would no longer be in the hypocritical position of having to claim that we were born nonresistant and no longer in a position of privilege. . . . This way one would not have to fear that the principle of nonresistance would be attacked by the state. We will not immediately have to give up the German language, but we will surely have to learn to suppress our feelings of contempt and animosity toward the Russian language and culture. We will have to make an heroic effort, with courage and integrity, to cleanse our own ranks and raise ourselves to a higher level. Shall we find leaders for such an effort? Our future depends on it.— A. A. Friesen, “Betrachtungen.”*

Under the above circumstances it would have been astonishing if the more educated Russian Mennonites had not entered into a discussion of the place of ethnic minorities in Russia in particular and in the modern world in general. The protagonists of that discussion were the two leading members of the **Studienkommission**: Benjamin Unruh and A. A. Friesen. Unruh commented on this discussion in a 1938 essay.

Already in 1921,” he wrote, “in an exchange of letters with a friend [A. A. Friesen], we debated this minority problem. My discussion partner, on the basis of the terrible upheavals in Russia and in opposition to his earlier convictions, now argued that a racial minority should assimilate itself [into the dominant culture] as rapidly as possible. We were living in the age of the nation state which simply would not tolerate an alien racial minority. Our attitude toward this issue in Russia – to have so adamantly resisted the purely national assimilation – had been one of our greatest mistakes. In the final analysis, it had been this resistance that had led to our [Russian] catastrophe.<sup>1</sup>

In that very serious discussion I espoused the other point of view. It was useless, I argued, *to depart from the path our nature and history had placed us on* [my emphasis].<sup>2</sup> For a sound policy with regard to minorities had [sooner or later] to be established in the world. The French Revolution had delighted in speaking loudly and at length about human rights. Is it not a human right to be allowed to speak one's mother tongue, to pray in one's mother tongue, to know and love what our forefathers, what our own people have known and loved the most? It appears to me that this problem should be on the world agenda as a right of all peoples . . .<sup>3</sup>

What Unruh portrays in the above passage is the classic conflict between the pragmatist and the idealist; Friesen apparently belonged to the former, Unruh to the latter.

Unruh's arguments are intriguing on several counts: First, because his view of history is both psychologically and theologically deterministic, at least in so far as it pertains to Mennonite history. In this regard the key sentence is the one in which he argues that it is "useless to depart from the path our *nature* and *history* [have] placed us on." The term "useless" implies that it will do us no good even to try to depart from this path; that it cannot in fact be done. Our path has been determined for us by two factors: our "nature" and our "history."<sup>4</sup>

Unruh never explained what he meant by the term, "Mennonite nature." But it must surely have had something to do with his and the Russian Mennonites' general use of the term *Völklein* when they talked about themselves. To my knowledge, no other group of Mennonites has ever employed the term. Nor was it used by the Mennonites in Prussia before their migration to Russia. The concept therefore must have emerged in Russia and clearly has everything to do with their development there as an independent, closed, ethno-religious society with virtually complete political independence. And they did in fact constitute an alien society within the Russian body politic, but not only in the latter. They were racially, linguistically, culturally and religiously alien. And they treasured this alien "nature." It in fact constituted their essence as a *Völklein*, as a small people or nation. It was a "nature" they believed depended on their isolation and which they fought tenaciously to preserve during the period of Russification even though their opposition alienated the Russian authorities. Precisely this "nature" constituted the problem for them in Russia. And if it was "useless" for Russian Mennonites to attempt to change their "nature," what hope was there that Russian Mennonites would ever be able to exist within Russian society once their isolation and independence had been removed? In his own way Unruh was every bit as dogmatic and deterministic as Pobedonostsev.

The other aspect of Unruh's deterministic perspective has to do with his view of Mennonite history. Clearly, from his theological point of

view, he saw Mennonite history as God-directed, as providential. It was therefore no accident that Mennonites had been persecuted in and driven out of the Netherlands, had sought sanctuary in Poland, and had eventually settled in Russia where God had provided the conditions that had allowed them, as he observed in another context, to develop a community that was "enabled to create, along with its religious life, a cultural community which put into practice many of the ideas that had originated in the minds of such leaders as Conrad Grebel." Such a community, Unruh contended, had been unique in the annals of Mennonite history. It was Unruh's clear implication that only in Russia had God led the Mennonites to the realization of their full potential; the realization of an ideal that had germinated in the minds of the earliest Anabaptist leaders. Such an ideal, therefore, and the providential conditions that had allowed it to come into existence, had to be cherished and recreated wherever they went. Moreover, it was "useless" to attempt to depart from this ideal and the historical path upon which God had placed them.

Unruh does not appear to have understood Russian history as determined by similar forces of "nature" and "providence." But Pobedonostsev and many other Russians did. Had he recognized similar forces at work in Russian history, how could he have ignored them? And if that history, too, was so determined, how could he explain the tragedy of the Mennonite experience in Russia: the result of the clash of these two psychologically determined "natures" and two providentially determined historical developments? It is probably no accident, therefore, that Unruh chose to ignore the development of Russian history which had resulted in the destruction of the God-ordained Mennonite ideal. Friesen, on the other hand, as Unruh himself observed, took as the point of departure for his argument "the terrible upheavals in Russia" in "opposition to his earlier [idealistic] convictions."

From this idealistic perspective then, and because he chose to ignore recent Russian history, Unruh was forced to argue that modern states should somehow be persuaded to tolerate minority groups like the Mennonites within their borders. He couched his argument in terms of human rights as first advocated by the French Revolution. Given the historical development of European nations since that time, however, during which Mennonites virtually everywhere had been forced to give up their principle of nonresistance, this was a pipe dream. Here Unruh's idealism led him astray, for who would persuade nations to adopt such principles? He knew full well that the Mennonite ideal was dead in Russia. Where might it still be possible? In some backward countries in which, eventually, a development not unlike the one in Russia would force them to face the same crisis again and again?<sup>5</sup>

It was from his idealistic/deterministic position that Unruh then criticized rather than analyzed the Russian government's policies toward its minorities during the war, saying:

[The Russian government's] policies toward its national minorities proved itself to be totally irrational;<sup>6</sup> these minorities were viewed by her from the beginning as inferior. With just a little more loyalty and magnanimity – which, by the way, is not alien to the Russian nature – one could have made the most fiery and dedicated patriots out of members of these alien races. Truly, one must rule a great empire with a little more political intelligence than a unified national state.<sup>7</sup>

What Unruh failed to take into consideration, however, was the very fact that Russia had embarked upon the attempt to transform its empire into a national state in the second half of the nineteenth century. Modern historical studies have made this only too apparent. Her Russification, universal military service, education, and assimilation policies all point in this direction. Alien land liquidation was, as Eric Lohr has argued, only an extension of this policy. One way or another, her empire would be transformed into a nation state. Had Unruh taken this factor into consideration he might have seen the contradiction in the last sentence of the above passage. That last sentence would also seem to concede Friesen's argument that minorities, especially as conceived in the Russian Mennonite ideal of a *Völklein*, cannot exist in a unified nation state.<sup>8</sup>

The term *Völklein* itself, taken in its Russian Mennonite context, may have expressed a relatively neutral racial viewpoint prior to World War I. But during the war, Russian Mennonites were "forced" to argue that they were of Dutch ancestry; that their *Völklein* was really only a small "branch" of a larger *Volk*. In other words, they were forced to consider the larger, national context of the term. Culturally, however, they were no longer Dutch but German. And when the German troops entered their region for a six-month stay in April of 1918, many, like Peter Braun himself,<sup>9</sup> came to recognize their "German-ness," something Unruh had asserted all along. As a consequence, many Russian Mennonites came to see their *Völklein* as a branch of the German, not of the Dutch tree. Hence their attempt to be repatriated to Germany immediately after the war and Unruh's attempt to convince the 1929-1930 refugees that Germany had helped them because she considered them a part of the German *Volk*. No sooner had this rescue taken place than Nazi ideology with its *völkisch* component appeared on the scene, and many Mennonites such as Unruh himself, Walter Quiring, and H. H. Schroeder, etc. fell prey to its blandishments.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps, having recognized this connection, it was, as Unruh argued, "useless" to attempt to depart from one's "nature."

That Unruh approached this entire matter from an idealistic – and we should add that the ideal was very much his own and that of the Russian Mennonites, not that of Conrad Grebel and other early Anabaptists – perspective is confirmed by B. B. Janz; he it was who characterized Unruh's arguments in the matter as a defense of the "Mennonite ideal." Most Russian Mennonites, as B. B. Janz also made clear, appeared to agree with this ideal. They hoped to recreate it no matter where "history" might lead them. But as most of the leaders quickly realized, such a re-creation would not be possible in countries with advanced civilizations; only, perhaps, in as yet underdeveloped countries. A. A. Friesen drew these conclusions not only from the Mennonite experience in Russia, but also from the Mennonite experience in Canada and the United States.<sup>11</sup> His was a realistic, pragmatic approach to the problem rooted in historical experience.<sup>12</sup> And he considered the dogged Mennonite adherence to this "Mennonite ideal" in Russia to have been their greatest mistake.

Friesen argued that it had been the initial Russian policy to settle Mennonites in closed communities that led eventually to the Mennonites' general antipathy to all things Russian. Isolated from, and uninfluenced by, events in Russia, their sojourn there had also separated the Mennonites from both the Dutch and German cultures. In Russia they had even avoided contact with the local Catholic and Lutheran German colonies. As a consequence, they had stagnated. They had been willing to accept less aggressive Russian teachers in their schools whom they could control, but had resisted the russification of their schools. They had battled the Russian government's attempts to deprive them of their military exemption, resisted her "sectarian" initiative. The land liquidation laws had merely been an extension in time of war of this earlier policy of the government and should not be divorced from it. That policy had "only [been] somewhat more distorted" in the land liquidation laws "and implemented in a crueler manner because of the war hysteria."

At the outset of the war, Friesen argued, the situation of the Mennonites in Russia had still been somewhat ambiguous. In their negotiations with the government Mennonites had declared themselves to be a religious community; they even believed that they were. In reality, however, he asserted, they had been well on their way to becoming a *Volkskirche* (a state church or church of the people), for they had been born into their faith. They had in fact constituted a national construct without really being aware of it. But their national identity, Friesen asserted, *was not German*. This was proven by the fact that during the more than hundred years they had lived next door to their neighboring German colonies, there had been no blending to speak of between the

two through intermarriage. This was not because of the differences in their faiths; it was due, rather, to their differing national characteristics. He remarked: "According to the impressions I received while in Holland, I am inclined to believe the fundamental traits of our national character to be of Dutch origin."<sup>13</sup> From these observations Friesen drew the following conclusions:

I see the source of all our troubles [in Russia] in this flawed assessment of ourselves [or who we are] and our relationship to the national Russian culture. Because of these failures we were unable to adopt a conscious, healthy attitude toward Russian culture generally. The government [as a consequence] may well have seen the matter with greater clarity. In any case, the government's attacks were not directed against the Mennonites as a confessional body, but against the Mennonites as a national construct. We for our part were not fighting for our faith but for the preservation of our *status quo*. This battle to assert ourselves for only unclearly perceived goals did little to further the constructive tendencies within us. Had the war not interrupted Russia's development, we might well have been forced – in a few decades – to recognize in astonishment that we were not ahead of all others, but that, in order to keep pace with the nation, we had more than enough to do.

Mennonites in Russia could have gone in two different directions, Friesen argued. On the one hand, they could have accepted the Russian language and culture. This would have entailed sacrificing the German language and their idiosyncratic ways. On the other hand, they could have chosen doggedly to assert themselves and their ways. Their choice of the latter had led to their disaster; it was a choice exacerbated in every way by the coming of the war. But what might have happened, Friesen asked, if the war had not occurred? To answer his own question, Friesen analyzed what had happened to two Mennonite groups in North America: the Old Mennonites in the United States, and the Old Colony Mennonites in Canada. The former had come to the United States in the eighteenth century from Switzerland and the Palatinate; the latter had come to Canada from the Chortitza Colony in Russia during the 1870s in the wake of Russia's universal conscription law.

The Old Mennonites, Friesen said, had come to the United States already some 200 years ago. There they had encountered a wide open land and, together with immigrants from other nations, had undertaken the work of pioneering. Of all the various Mennonites in the world, he observed, these Old Mennonites still clung most tenaciously to their chief dogma, nonresistance. In spite of this, they had adopted the culture of the land, accepted the national language, and clearly understood the nation's highest ideals. They were opposed neither to the nation or its culture. At the same time, however, they had been able to keep the negative characteristics of Americanism at arm's length.



They were, Friesen affirmed, true Americans in the best sense of the word, and they really did constitute a confessional entity within the American nation. Of all Mennonites, they were the most culturally advanced and had the best chance of remaining culturally healthy and confessionally pure and firm. Because of their unwavering stand during the last war, they had won the respect of the government. Quakers had undergone a similar development, Friesen observed, only for them language had not been an issue. Morally and spiritually, he concluded, the Quakers were on a slightly higher plane than the Old Mennonites.

To this example of cultural and national assimilation, all the while not only preserving but also enhancing its spiritual identity, Friesen contrasted the development of the Old Colony Mennonites. The latter, he asserted, had arrived in Manitoba in 1873 with an extraordinary sense of being martyrs for their faith and had immediately segregated themselves from all other people. Their education had been less than adequate, their material success pathetic. Convinced of their superiority, they had declined to participate in the country's development. Initially, they might have had some advantages over others. They were convinced that everything they had remembered and brought with them from Russia was the ideal and the goal to be achieved in the new country. But they stagnated in their isolation and eventually began to fall behind. Particularly detrimental to them was the fact that their bishops and preachers had gradually gained an absolute hegemony over the congregations. All that their seclusion from the national interests and their battle for nebulously conceived goals had brought them, however, was spiritual decline and moral decay. They refused to learn English or send their children to the provincial schools; at the same time, their own schools were woefully inadequate. To be sure, Friesen asserted, the measures adopted against them by the government from 1914 to 1918, under the influence of a war psychosis, had been too severe. And so, at present, these people were leaving Canada, going from sound material circumstances into the unknown of a new pioneering enterprise; from healthy political and national conditions to very unstable political conditions; to Mexico. They, of course, still considered themselves martyrs. Friesen, however, regarded them to be fools. He could not escape the conclusion, he asserted, that the fate of the Old Colony Mennonites was the logical consequence of their attitude toward the province and the nation. They were, he concluded, anti-national; and in their teaching and way of life, impure.

Clearly, for Friesen the very notion of a Mennonite *Völklein* had become anathema. Mennonites could only have conceived of themselves in this manner because, as he put it, they had been well on the way to constituting a *Volkskirche* in Russia. It is ironic that A. A. Friesen

the economist had to make the point<sup>14</sup> and not Benjamin Unruh, the “historian of church and dogma” as he termed himself. Rather than having realized in Russia the ideals that had germinated in the mind of Conrad Grebel so many years ago, as Unruh put it, Russian Mennonites had perverted one of its cardinal principles: that of separation of Church and State. They might have gotten away with this had they in fact constituted a *Volk* – a nation with its own borders and political institutions. But as a *Völklein* within the borders of another nation, even an empire, they would sooner or later, given the development of most nations, have run afoul of national sentiment. The war had merely accelerated and exacerbated the process in Russia. Therefore Friesen argued that “the self-sufficient existence of small national minorities in the modern state [is] an impossibility.” In line with this conclusion, he considered the theoretical discussion of the place of minorities by world powers to be merely a bow in the direction of “high sounding principles” which states had no intention of “implementing at home.” The essential question for Russian Mennonites, he argued, was not whether they would be assimilated; rather it was where such assimilation could most easily and harmoniously be accomplished.

For Friesen, only two countries in Europe proper, both for racial and economic reasons, could come into consideration as homelands for Russian Mennonites. These were Germany and Holland. In Germany, he argued, linguistic accommodation would not be a problem, but German ideals were alien to Mennonites. He criticized those amongst the Russian Mennonites who assumed that they were in fact German. This was not the case; Russian Mennonites were not German. He continued:

The few that could be counted exceptions [to this rule] were those who spent their student years in Germany and who absorbed the essential German being during their formative intellectual development. But even these repeatedly manifested strong tendencies characteristic of their old homeland. We must seek the origin of our intellectual being elsewhere. For even the Germans would not regard us, or accept us, as their own; they would regard us as Russians.<sup>15</sup>

But if Russian Mennonites could not go back to Germany, neither could they return to the Netherlands or its colonies: Holland had no land to spare, and because of their tropical climates, her colonies were unsuitable for Mennonite settlement. Latin American countries, while economically suitable for settlement, were to be rejected because of their unstable governments. And South Africa, although mentioned from time to time as a settlement possibility, was too unknown a quantity for them at the moment. Hence, there remained Canada and the United States. Because of their English language, these countries shared the

greatest kinship with the "Dutch" Mennonites. They also offered the best prospects for intellectual and material growth and success.<sup>16</sup>

The one thing neither Friesen nor Unruh addressed in their discussions concerning assimilation, however, and probably the most critical factor of all, was the Russian assumption about race and religion. This assumption, that there existed an organic connection between the Russian and his Orthodox religion, was as exclusionary a view as the Mennonite understanding of their own existence as a *Völklein*, as a providentially guided religious and cultural people. Had they known Russian history better they would have had to realize that, given the circumstances, it was impossible for them to continue living in Russia since neither the one nor the other was willing to concede anything in this regard. Especially since the power of the Russian state was behind the Russian view, at least until after the 1917 Revolution, and Mennonites as an ethno-religious minority were powerless.

The war and its aftermath in Russia posed perhaps the most serious crisis any group of Mennonites has ever faced. That crisis continued for those who could not or chose not to emigrate during the 1920s; it continued to the collapse of Russia's Communist government in 1991. But the events of the war also raised serious internal questions among the Russian Mennonites: questions regarding their ethnic and cultural identity; their way of life; even of their very being as Christians, if one is to believe Peter Braun. And as we shall see in the following chapter, it placed in doubt their most tenaciously held belief: that of nonresistance. But in respect to what the lessons were that Mennonites should learn from their Russian experience, no one represented the two poles of the argument better than Benjamin Unruh and A. A. Friesen. The latter, because of his realism, saw matters much more clearly than did Unruh. Indeed, subsequent Mennonite history in Mexico and Latin America has proven Friesen to have been much more prescient than any other Russian Mennonite, Unruh included,<sup>17</sup> even though both could have benefited from a better understanding of Russian religious and political history.



## PART IV

---

# **The War, its Aftermath, and the Russian Mennonite Search for Identity**



## War and Ethnic Identity: “A Process of Clarification”

*I have dealt with the question of [Russian Mennonite] origins academically and thoroughly in my study “The Dutch/Low German Backgrounds of the Eastward Migration of Mennonites in the 16<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries.” The determination to tackle such a study was born at the Congress in Moscow (April, 1917).<sup>1</sup> Our brotherhood should make it possible for the work to appear. People are awaiting the investigation above all also in non-Mennonite circles. We should wish to demonstrate to the world that we are not only formidable colonizers, earnest reform-minded Christians, peace-loving people, but that we are also reputable scholars.*

— Benjamin H. Unruh, “Autobiographie,” — *Der Bote*: 19 September, 1951.

One year after the death of his close friend Peter Braun, B. B. Wiens placed the Russian Mennonites’ “Dutch argument” into perspective. When the war had erupted, Wiens observed, the specter of the liquidation of their land had arisen. Being a people of the soil, they had been driven to despair and, finally, into the political arena to fight for their very existence. They began to haunt the halls of power, to seek audiences with rulers in high places. Initially, they tried to convince the authorities that they were the most loyal of Russian subjects; then that they were of Dutch, not German, ancestry.<sup>2</sup> In their petitions to the governing authorities they asserted, “. . . in the name of the Most High, that not a drop of German blood flowed in [their] veins.” When neither argument proved effective and the government actually began to liquidate their land they even contemplated appealing to the all-powerful Rasputin! At the height of their despair, however, the political winds began to shift: the Romanov dynasty fell from power and was replaced by a provisional government. In 1918 German armies moved into the Ukraine; suddenly Mennonites were Germans. This clumsiest of politics, Wiens asserted, sealed their fate, for within some six months the German troops were withdrawn. Whatever respect Russians favorably disposed to them still had for the Mennonites was now gone. So was the respect they had had for themselves.<sup>3</sup> The one thing Wiens did not address, however, was the effect this “clumsiest of politics” had had upon the Russian Mennonites’ sense of identity.

Over the years Mennonites had contended that the government could not break the promises made them in the great *Privilegium*; they,

however, changed sides and arguments when it suited them in their time of crisis. And they did so with much greater alacrity than had the Russian government. To be sure, unlike the rulers they were largely powerless and had to take advantage of whatever means of salvation were available to them. Even so, did the same persons who had propounded and defended the "Dutch argument" during the war now shift to the "German" side? Or were there individuals, perhaps whole groups, who had always been pro-German and now simply seized the opportunity to make their point?

There can be little doubt that not all Russian Mennonites were happy with the "Dutch argument," some of them from the very outset of the war.<sup>4</sup> Though not as pronounced as elsewhere, one can already see the division on the issue in the differing attitudes of the three Halbstadt Braun brothers: Jacob, Heinrich, and Peter. Heinrich, as we have argued, may well have initially formulated the argument; he did become its most vocal proponent, even (according to Benjamin Unruh at least) to the extent of defending extreme versions of it in a December, 1916 submission to Nicholas II and again at the Moscow Congress of Germans in Russia after the war had ended. His more academically inclined brother Peter expounded the argument in written form, in its first and classic expression in 1914/1915. A third brother, Raduga's accountant Jacob, older and perhaps wiser than his two younger brothers, was less enthusiastic about it. The latter's son, Peter, said of his father's position:

. . . Had we not always, under pressure of the war with Germany, *been forced* to emphasize the fact that we wanted nothing to do with those barbarians? That we were really sons and daughters of the Netherlands? My father, so straightforward in everything, always avoided this question. To be sure, he did say on one occasion that there was such a thing as Prussian-Holland [my emphasis].<sup>5</sup>

There must have been others who, like Jacob Braun, objected to the argument but kept their own counsel during the war years. And then there were the outspoken opponents, Benjamin H. Unruh probably foremost amongst them. In an article written in January, 1937 he stated:

. . . The information contained in those submissions, especially in the one to the Russian Tsar, are sadly lacking in knowledge of the subject. Some of my friends and I at the time warned strongly against the employment of such methods; I even did so once from the Halbstadt pulpit. I was pleased that my unforgettable teacher, Johann Heinrich Janzen, shared our point of view.<sup>6</sup>

It was the latter, perhaps together with those who had not spoken out on the subject, who probably surfaced to attack both the argument and



its proponents the moment the provisional government was in place and the liquidation of Mennonite lands put in abeyance. This factor alone may have played a significant role in the attack on H. J. Braun upon his return from St. Petersburg. Were these individuals also the ones to declare themselves German when the German armies moved in? Unruh has remained strangely silent on this part of the story while attacking the "Dutch argument," and especially the alleged Braun/Thiessen December, 1916 submission, at virtually every turn.

Whatever the discussion of the matter among Russia's Mennonites during the war,<sup>7</sup> the debate outside of Russia appears to have been sparked by an article written by none other than Abraham Kroeker, editor of the *Friedensstimme* and an obvious proponent of the "Dutch argument." Published in the *Mennonitische Rundschau* on 21 July, 1915<sup>8</sup>, Kroeker, in a discussion in part of the first land liquidation law of the previous February, wrote that Russian Mennonites, "on the basis of their Dutch ancestry, might have an opportunity to escape the consequences of the law." At the same time, he reported, the Duma had not yet acted on the measure. But no matter what happened with regard to the law, Kroeker continued, Russian Mennonites had decided to emigrate after the war. They had already been looking at Posen in Germany before the war, but no longer. Now they were considering North America, South America, even Australia. Above all, however, the lands inhabited by the Boers of South Africa were being considered because, "of course, [the Boers] are our cousins (Hollanders) who, at the moment, are enjoying many freedoms under British rule."<sup>9</sup>

By January, 1916 the *Mennonitische Blätter* began carrying articles on the future of the Russian Mennonites. The first writer, a German, recognized the impossibility of their situation in Russia, even after the war. In an attempt to save them for *das Deutschtum* he had contacted the head of the government agency dealing with returning Germans (Deutsche Rückwanderer) to discuss the matter. He hoped to help return them to their "motherland," their "old homeland," after the war.<sup>10</sup>

Only three months later the basic outlines of the debate began to take shape in an exchange, in the pages of the *Mennonitische Blätter*, between a Dutch Mennonite and H. van der Smissen, a German of Dutch extraction. The former, C. M. ten Cate, also concerned with the fate of the Russian Mennonites, suggested that if the latter wished to retain their nonresistance they would be limited as to the countries that would accept them as immigrants. Perhaps, he suggested, Dutch Indonesia could prove an exception. In any case, everything German was anathema in Russia at the moment, and would probably remain so even after the war. But then, he asked,

... Are not the Russian Mennonites more Dutch than German? Certainly the majority of them are Dutch according to their national origin; their language, indeed, is more than a little reminiscent of the Dutch, especially the Frisian tongue. Germany may well have been the country in which they resided for many years, but their ties to Germany are no closer than to any other country in the world.<sup>11</sup>

Van der Smissen, cognizant of his overwhelmingly Germanic readership, could not allow such a statement to go unchallenged; he answered in the same issue, indeed, as "Part II" of the article.<sup>12</sup> After a brief discussion of the liquidation laws and the Russian Mennonites' stubborn adherence to their pacifist principles, van der Smissen observed:

How much more secure is the position of the German Mennonites, to whom our Russian Mennonites fundamentally belong! The Dutch brother's question, whether or not they are more Dutch than German, may be debated by experts in the field. But Germany was the place from which they migrated to Russia, German is their language and German their customs to this very day, German has been the education that their younger generations have for decades absorbed and brought back home to inspire their colonies. Indeed, if one can trust oral reports, the veracity of which we have been unable to confirm, Russian Mennonites have already attempted to prove their Dutch ancestry to the [Russian] authorities. But they were thoroughly embarrassed when these authorities responded by recommending that, if that were the case, they simply carry on their church services and instruction in religion in the Dutch rather than the German language.<sup>13</sup>

This, of course, the Russian Mennonites had been unable to do.

Van der Smissen returned to the topic about a year later, this time in the context of his review of John Horsch's 1916 Menno biography. He observed there that in his youth "it was a generally accepted fact that Mennonites were not originally German but of a purely Dutch origin who had been provided a new home through the indulgence of the princes and God's gracious leading." But Keller's research had proven all this wrong; there had been a thoroughly Germanic branch of the movement.<sup>14</sup> In light of this, the Dutch influence had to be put in perspective. C. M. ten Cate had misinterpreted his intent and attacked him for trying, in the midst of the war, to intrude a nationalistic element into the study of Anabaptist history. This, however, had not been his intent, van der Smissen asserted; he had only wished to make the point that German Mennonites were not simply Dutch immigrants. His own church proved this.<sup>15</sup>

The debate in Russia ran its own course. During the war, proponents of the "Dutch argument" appear to have faced little vocal opposition. Mennonite pragmatism would in any case have demanded no less. But when the political landscape changed, the opposition began to surface. The first occasion for doing so appears to have been the fall of the

Romanov dynasty and the creation of a provisional government, both of which Russian Mennonites greeted with unmitigated joy and a profound sense of relief. For once again they had experienced how arbitrary rule could be "cruel with impunity."<sup>16</sup>

Immediately after the establishment of a provisional government, Karl Lindemann began to organize a congress of Germans in Russia. Its purpose was to bring about a measure of unity among the disparate groups in order that they might operate from a position of greater strength in the future. Johann Willms and Benjamin H. Unruh were elected to represent the Molotschna Mennonites. Of the two, we know that Unruh was an opponent of the "Dutch argument"; Willms, to judge by his later actions, may have been even more pro-German than Unruh. Whatever the case, at the congress which met already in April of 1917, a proposal was floated by a Volga German to unite all groups in one organization to be called: "Russian Citizens of German Descent." As we have seen, H. J. Braun objected to the emphasis on the "Germanic" nature of the organization, asserting that Mennonites, because they were Dutch, could not sign on to such a document. Unruh later called Braun's declaration an exploding bomb that had nearly scuttled the congress. To salvage matters Unruh had himself taken to the floor and delivered a speech in which he had developed the following three themes: first, that the majority of the Russian Mennonites had indeed come from the Dutch/Low German regions of Europe; that they had become Germanized, in a cultural sense, during their lengthy sojourn in East German lands; and that the Russian Mennonites were prepared to cooperate with their fellow Russian citizens of German extraction, but with the reservation that they retain their religious and cultural autonomy.

Somewhat later, these two Molotschna Mennonite delegates had spoken with Kerensky himself. He advised them to go home and organize themselves for the upcoming elections to a constituent assembly. This they had done, preparing a brochure dealing with the issues at stake and establishing a working relationship with the Russian Citizens of German Extraction. Then they had organized themselves as a larger political entity from Odessa to Vladivostok.<sup>17</sup> But before the elections could be held, the Bolshevik Revolution was unleashed in October, 1917 and a civil war broke out. By January, 1918 the Bolshevik front reached into the Mennonite colonies. The inhabitants, who would later ally themselves with the Whites, came under a reign of terror. Arbitrary arrests, forced requisitions, robberies and indiscriminate executions became the order of the day.<sup>18</sup> According to Peter Braun, these few months from January to April, 1918, cost the Halbstadt volost alone some 3,291,188 rubles. In April, however, German armies moved in.<sup>19</sup>

Mennonites understandably, but to their later detriment, welcomed them with open arms; H. J. Braun himself being sent out by the volost government to do so.

However H. J. Braun may have felt about his actions, he does not appear to have been affected by the German presence in the same way that his brother Peter was. For the latter, the war, the revolution and the presence of German troops in the summer of 1918 constituted a kind of epiphany. He wrote about it to the *Mennonitische Flüchtlingsfürsorge*, a German Mennonite relief organization, in April of 1922.

Prior to the war we – I mean the *Germans* of South Russia – were in fairly constant touch with the German world of ideas. The scholarly connections between here and there during the last number of years had become both more intimate and more active; news and letters traveled back and forth, newspapers and books from there were our daily intellectual food – especially the books. Ah, that irreplaceable, unforgettable German book – only now do we realize how much it gave us and what it meant to us! Then came the calamitous war; suddenly all ties to Germany were severed, all contacts destroyed, nothing arrived from there and nothing was sent from here. At that point the great tribulation began, for you as well as for us. An interminable hope for, yet fear of, the outcome of the great conflict of nations [gripped us]; our fear and worry concerning the fate of our hard-pressed homeland [Germany] increased; to all of this was added an emotional suffering, a suffering that reached deep into our very souls. Gradually, under these circumstances, *it became ever more apparent to us whose intellectual* ["Geistes" not in the sense of "spiritual"] *children we were, where we really belonged, for whom our hearts beat* [my emphasis]. The summer months of 1918 [when German troops were in Halbstadt] influenced and solidified this process of clarification even more. We had been awakened out of our blissful childhood slumber to a national consciousness; the result was that we suddenly felt ourselves lonesome and God-forsaken, no longer having any contact with Germany, and over here having lost the ground from under us. Nevertheless, we had achieved inner clarity as to who we really were. In spite of having been separated from the German race all these years, we have felt for them and suffered with them; now we dare to hope that we have drunk the last dregs of suffering. Whatever may come, this recognized truth has profoundly penetrated our consciousness, and we both desire and intend to cherish and assert our *Deutschtum* (German-ness) now more than ever after the difficult experiences of the last years . . . .<sup>20</sup>

One wonders how many other Russian Mennonites were affected in the same way.<sup>21</sup> But it is particularly noteworthy that Peter Braun, the author of *Kto takie Mennonity* with its "Dutch argument," was so affected. Certainly, as A. A. Friesen was to argue later, those who had studied in Germany had always been more pro-German than pro-Dutch, though this was not the case with H. J. Braun. But here was a man who, as Unruh pointed out in his later biography of Peter Braun, had received a purely Russian education proclaiming that he was a Ger-

man. The relatively more distant Mennonite experience of the Boer War with its recognition of their Dutch ethnicity had been superseded by the more profound experience of being rescued by the German soldiers with whom they shared their cultural *Deutschtum*.

No sooner had the German troops moved into the Molotschna colony than Peter Braun, on 24 April, 1918, wrote his brother Abraham in Germany, describing the period of Bolshevik terror and their release from it through the German army. The last three months, he wrote, they had lived in constant fear for their lives. They had been ruled during that time by robbers and murderers; extortion and violence had been their daily companions. A few months earlier, these rulers had brought in a contingent of Black Sea sailors, the very essence of terror, to assist them. For an entire week these sailors had terrorized the local populace, killing a number of prominent persons. Then, in the last few weeks, the robber bands of Nestor Makhno had been added to the Bolsheviks, making conditions intolerable. Armed to the teeth, the latter had roamed the streets, cursing, threatening, demanding money, robbing homes at will. At the least sign of resistance they threatened to snuff out a person's life.

How they had longed, Braun told his brother, for release from these conditions. Then, in the morning of 17 April, both the Reds and the anarchists had fled the scene in utter disarray. A few stragglers had appeared that night, but they too had left quickly. Finally, on the nineteenth, the first German soldiers had appeared. It had been an unforgettable moment Braun assured his brother, saying:

... That was an experience. I will not write you how we greeted them, but our [train] station has never – even during the first days of mobilization – seen a gathering of people as on that 19 April. Little wonder! First of all they were German; secondly they had saved us in the hour of our greatest need. Our joy was certainly sincere, and our welcome of them was profoundly heartfelt. The entire cohort – some 700 to 800 men – was put up for night [in private homes] in Halbstadt, Neuhalbstadt, and Muntau; and we showed them all the love and friendliness of which we were capable. I do believe these people – primarily Rhinelanders – enjoyed themselves in our midst.<sup>22</sup>

One can understand why, under such circumstances, these Russian Mennonites identified themselves with (and as) Germans. But was it not an even more opportunistic identification than their self-identification as Dutch had been during the war? And their enemies who had accused them of being German spies during the war, were they not now proven right? Their Russian neighbors saw what was happening; as did Nestor Makhno and his henchmen. Word of the Mennonite reception of the German troops spread abroad.<sup>23</sup>

When the Bolsheviks came to power in October of 1917 they realized almost immediately that to gain control of Russia they needed peace with Germany. At the same time, however, they hoped to use peace talks to propagandize and revolutionize the German populace.<sup>24</sup> One of the provisional government's greatest errors had been to continue the war when there was virtually no hope of victory. And so, already on 13 November, 1917 Trotzky applied to the German High Command for an armistice. The Central Powers, fearing the imminent entry of the United States into the conflict (the U S declared war on 6 April), sought to resolve their problems on the Eastern front, and, after considerable posturing by the Soviets, did so in the treaty of Brest-Litovsk on 3 March. By the terms of the treaty, Russia was compelled to give up most of its European territories as well as remove all of its troops from the Ukraine. Nearly a month earlier already, Germany had signed an agreement with the Ukrainian Rada that allowed her to send in an Austro-German occupation army to ensure Ukrainian independence from the Reds in return for the supply of foodstuffs. When the latter was not forthcoming in the amounts agreed upon, the Rada was dismissed and a puppet government under Skorpadsky set up.

The war in the West did not go as well for the Germans as they had hoped, however, and so, on 11 November 1918, an armistice was signed with the Allied Powers. This forced the Central Powers to withdraw their troops from the Ukraine. No sooner had they done so than the Bolsheviks and the Makhno bandits returned to fill the vacuum. German troops, as Peter Braun reported to his brother, who had arrived in the Molotschna on 19 April, 1918, were now, in the fall of 1918, forced to leave; they had been in the Ukraine some six to seven months. According to Orlando Figes, the Ukrainian peasants were bitterly opposed to the German troops. The latter, however, were to be in charge of transporting grain and other foodstuffs to Germany agreed to under the 9 February, 1918 Peace Treaty between the two countries – some 300 truckloads of grain per day in exchange for ensuring Ukrainian independence from Bolshevik Russia.<sup>25</sup> Though the peasants had generally supported the Rada during 1917, they were opposed to the export of grain to Germany. As a consequence, they reduced their grain productivity and concealed what they had from the Rada agents. When the Rada then failed to meet its quotas, the German troops themselves moved into the villages to collect the grain. The latter did not much care where they got it, or the hardships collecting the grain imposed on many peasants. Those who refused to deliver their share were hauled before the military courts. At the same time, lands that had been taken from Mennonite and German colonists during the latter years of the war under the land liquidation laws and during the period of Makhno

terror were forcibly returned to their previous owners.<sup>26</sup> Goods stolen from the Mennonite villages during the same period were located in the surrounding Ukrainian villages and retrieved. Mennonite young men were provided with weapons while those of the surrounding Ukrainian villagers were confiscated. Even the occasional Mennonite punitive expedition [Strafexpedition] was sent into the Ukrainian villages, not only to retrieve stolen property but also to mete out arbitrary "justice." One Mennonite eyewitness, whose village refused to have its wagons and goods forcibly returned, commented: "How happy we were when, after about three to four months, the German troops began to depart and the Reds resurfaced *en mass* and began to wreak their vengeance on the responsible parties, put them up against the wall and shot them. In our village, however, no one was mistreated."<sup>27</sup> When the occupying German troops left, the local hatred was transferred to the Mennonite villagers. Nor was it undeserved, for Mennonites had taken advantage of the German presence to do things to their Ukrainian neighbors clearly in conflict with their nonresistance creed.

It was during this period of German occupation (the sources are not specific as to the precise dates) that the Russian Mennonites renewed their contacts with their German colonist counterparts, investigated their possible repatriation to Germany<sup>28</sup>, and even became involved in a German colonist scheme to set up an independent colonist state under German protection in the Crimean peninsula.

By the terms of Brest-Litovsk, Germans living in Russia were granted the right, after ratification, of returning to the land of their origin (to be repatriated) over a period of ten years. The Soviet government promised to release such persons from any ties to their country, and the Germans promised not to hinder their entry into Germany through either diplomatic or consular representatives. The departing Russian Germans were also promised the right to sell their property and to take the proceeds, as well as any moveable goods they wished, to Germany. They were even to be financially compensated by the German government for the wrongs suffered because of their *Deutschtum* during the war.<sup>29</sup> These conditions had already been incorporated in the 9 February, 1918 peace treaty between Germany and the Ukraine a few months earlier.<sup>30</sup>

Benjamin Unruh, who was heavily involved in these negotiations, wrote about them in a letter of 19 May, 1922 to B. B. Janz, and in another of 28 October, 1926 to Peter Braun. In the spring of 1918, that is right after the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty between the Reds and the Central Powers, and the arrival of German troops in the Molotschna, a German Lutheran minister by the name of Immanuel Winkler came to Halbstadt. There, in the *Mennozentrum*, he developed what Unruh called "his utopian plans." Unruh does not tell us what

these plans were. However, one can get some sense of their content from the 1922 *Jahrbuch des Vereins für das Deutschtum im Ausland* (Yearbook of the Association of Germans Abroad). There one reads:

... The idea of an autonomous German/South-Russian state under German protection, that was to include the coastline between Pruth and the Don, the Crimean peninsula, the estuary of the Don and a part of the Kuban estuary – that is, part of the coast of the Sea of Azov – was the product of a suddenly erupting national enthusiasm. The desperate situation and ... greed were responsible for such sentiments expressed to the – at the time – victor in the world war.<sup>31</sup>

The author explicitly states that these plans came out of the 1918 Prischib Conference and were enshrined in the “Prischib Resolutions.” Whereas Unruh asserts that, at the meeting with Winkler in Halbstadt, the Mennonites rejected Winkler’s plans as unrealistic, they nevertheless agreed to cooperate with the German colonists, just as they had promised to do at the April, 1917 Moscow Congress. As a consequence, Winkler invited them to a forthcoming congress in Prischib where the “Prischib Resolutions” were formulated.

No sooner had Winkler departed Halbstadt than extended discussions took place among the Mennonite delegates in the *Mennozentrum* regarding the pending congress. The members of the *MZ*, according to Unruh, rejected Winkler’s plans out of hand in these discussions. Nevertheless, they decided to attend the Prischib Congress in order to investigate, and perhaps clarify, emigration possibilities.<sup>32</sup> On the eve of the congress, the Mennonite delegates assembled in the Halbstadt Central School where Unruh, as Chairman of the *MZ*, declared emigration to be the only issue they would discuss in Prischib. Their hope was, he wrote – given the Brest-Litovsk Treaty – “that the colonists would be able to liquidate their assets and return to Germany [be repatriated to Germany].”

Winkler once again presented his “plan” at the Prischib Congress, but the Mennonite delegates refused to support it. Despite that, Winkler’s resolutions appear to have passed and some kind of subsequent meeting slated for Berlin to discuss his plans with the German authorities. The day following the Prischib gathering, Mennonite delegates met in the Halbstadt church to elect representatives to this Berlin meeting. Johann Willms, a supporter of the Winkler plan,<sup>33</sup> was elected the principal delegate; [H. H.] Epp and [Benjamin] Unruh were to be his assistants. A. A. Friesen was specifically elected to investigate the possibilities of migrating to Germany.

According to Unruh, the Mennonites once more distanced themselves from Winkler’s plans in Berlin. Unruh does not inform us, however, as to what, if anything, they achieved. He does say that Winkler



met with Hindenberg and Ludendorf, apparently to discuss his "plans."<sup>34</sup> He also suggests that the publicity about Winkler's politics may have compromised German plans for the Ukraine.<sup>35</sup> Unruh then proceeds to observe that at the second Ohrloff Congress of 18 September, 1918, Mennonite delegates once again addressed the issue of repatriation to Germany. But by this time Germany's position in Europe had changed for the worse and so the Mennonite in charge of the matter, probably A. A. Friesen, advised against it. Unruh concludes that throughout these negotiations Mennonites remained very realistic, saying: "how sober Mennonites remained throughout [these events] is demonstrated by the fact that they were still Russian citizens in the fall."<sup>36</sup> Does this mean that Russian Mennonites could have become German citizens at this time?<sup>37</sup> Did Russian Mennonites really possess a dual citizenship as the Russian government had declared in its preamble to the first land liquidation law? Whatever the case, after the 11 November, 1918 Armistice Germany's position was such that a return there by the Mennonites became a virtual impossibility. Defeat, the collapse of the Hohenzollern Empire, revolt, famine and governmental transition and uncertainty all changed conditions dramatically. By 23 March, 1921, Frank Stolfuss wrote from Constantinople to Levi Mumaw: ". . . He [the German Counsel, Dr. Shverbel] seems to be absolutely against any Russians, colonists or others, to go to Germany; and hopelessly pessimistic about conditions all over Europe . . ."<sup>38</sup>

What is important about these events – and one would like to know more about them – is that the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and the presence of German troops in the midst of the Russian Mennonite colonies led to some very serious and extended consideration of Mennonite repatriation to Germany. This is quite remarkable in light of the fact that the Russian Mennonites had in their majority "rejected everything Germanic" during the war years and asserted that they were of Dutch ancestry. But here, under the terms of Brest-Litovsk, they came to Germany seeking to be repatriated to their *Stammland*: their country of national origin. With German troops at their backs and Brest-Litovsk winds in their sails, it was now full steam ahead for Germany. No matter that they proceeded "soberly."

As far as the Russians were now concerned, Mennonites had destroyed their own "Dutch argument." But the worst was yet to come. In the six-or-so months German troops were in the Mennonite regions – the last German troops left on 27 November, 1918 – a German general by the name of Sonntag had helped to train and organize a group of young Mennonite men for purposes of self-defense once the troops were no longer present. No sooner had the German troops left than the Makhno bandits began to reappear. At first the isolated land owners

were attacked, many being robbed and murdered. To defend themselves the Prischib, Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld volosts, consisting of Catholics, Lutherans and Mennonites respectively, organized themselves for defensive purposes. In the meantime, the counter-revolutionary White army appeared in the region, supplying leadership for the *Selbstschutz*.<sup>39</sup> Until 10-11 March these *Selbstschützler* fended off the Makhno hordes in valiant fashion, but then it was over. The collapse of the *Selbstschutz* led to the panicked flight of the Mennonite and German villagers to the Crimean peninsula. They found no enduring sanctuary there, however, and so sooner or later all had to return to their homes. Visions of a German state in the Crimean peninsula under German protection were now just a distant and dissipating dream.<sup>40</sup>

This time, the return of the Makhno anarchists into the Mennonite villages was accompanied by the Red army, which limited somewhat the Makhno terror. Nevertheless, the period from March to June, 1919 was filled with hardships for the Mennonite colonists.<sup>41</sup>

The decision to form a *Selbstschutz* caused considerable internal dissension and turmoil in the colonies; its actions, however, destroyed Mennonite credibility in regard to their repeated assertions to both the Tsarist and provisional governments that they would sooner suffer violence than inflict it; that no matter what happened, they refused to shed human blood.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, said the Russians, Mennonites refused to shed their blood in defense of the motherland which they claimed to love so fervently; but in defense of family and property they had no qualms whatsoever about shedding blood. Their nonresistance was as much of a sham as had been their "Dutch argument." They really were Germans, and bloodthirsty ones at that; sons of wealthy landowners fighting for privileged status in an alien land.<sup>43</sup>

According to Benjamin Unruh, then Chair of the *Mennozentrum*, as General Denikin's forces were being pushed south in the fall of 1919 by the Red army and Makhno's hordes, a meeting of its directors, enlarged to include others, took place in the Halbstadt bank building. Those present decided to call a meeting of the representatives of the Rückenau Colony to discuss the growing crisis. Meeting in early 1919, the representatives decided to take action on two fronts: on the one hand, they elected a commission to be headed by A. A. Friesen to nominate members of a *Studienkommission* to investigate possibilities for emigration (but no longer to Germany); on the other, they elected H. J. Braun and H. H. Schroeder to present a memorandum, drafted in the Russian language by Peter J. Braun (secretary of the *Mennozentrum*) and Benjamin Unruh, dealing with their plans and explaining their position fully to Denikin. Apparently the latter, because of the Mennonite involvement with Winkler and the German government in 1918, suspected them of treason. A.

A. Friesen, Benjamin Unruh and C. H. Warkentin were subsequently elected to the *Studienkommission*, with Friesen appointed chairman and Unruh secretary. John Esau, former mayor of Ekaterinoslav and already in Berlin, was to be asked to join the group in Europe.<sup>44</sup>

The first official action taken by the *Studienkommission* was to draft a memorandum on the conditions then pertaining in Russia that mandated the emigration of the Mennonites, and send it to the General Conference of Mennonites in North America on 18 January, 1920.<sup>45</sup> The members of the *Studienkommission* must have departed for Batoum and then Constantinople shortly afterwards. In the Crimea, Berdjansk to be precise, C. H. Warkentin acquired Imperial Russian passes for them through the good offices of the Denikin government in Simferopol. Despite this, they were still detained six weeks in Constantinople. Negotiations, mediated by a German representative at the Swedish embassy, finally led to an entry visa to Switzerland, where Unruh had studied during the early years of the century.<sup>46</sup> But before the group could leave, transit permission had to be obtained from Italy and France. Italy was immediately forthcoming; France more reluctant, but in the end granted permission. In the A. A. Friesen papers there is a copy of a communiqué sent to the Dutch embassy. It reads in part:

Legation Royale des Pays-Bas  
No. 30/D R

... la Legation a reçu communauté religieuse des Mennonites *d'origine hollandaise* et qu'ils n'ont pas des rapports avec le bolchevisme.

Pera, le 4 février 1920  
(signature)  
dragoman.<sup>47</sup>

What is noteworthy in the above connection is that the delegation, Unruh prominently included, spoke of itself as representing a group of Mennonites in Russia who were of *Dutch origin*. Just two years earlier they had gone to Germany claiming it as their country of origin.

By April the group was in Switzerland where Unruh's former professors at the University of Basel and Christian Neff of the Weierhof helped them get in touch with the Dutch Mennonite pastor, Dr. A. Kuiper of Amsterdam, as well as with C. H. Warkentin's son, Dr. Heinrich Warkentin of Rotterdam, at the time attached to the office of the Ukrainian ambassador to the Netherlands. After a stay of perhaps several months in Switzerland and South Germany, the *Studienkommission* arrived in the Netherlands where the members met with Dutch Mennonite leaders and prepared to sail for North America. Among oth-

ers, they met with a Mr. G. Vissering in Amsterdam.<sup>48</sup> In a letter to Alvin J. Miller of June, 1920 from on board ship,<sup>49</sup> A. A. Friesen explained Vissering's importance:

... Through some of our brothers who met us [in Holland], we were brought into contact with Mennonite financiers with European wide connections. We discussed our concerns with them in depth; they, in turn, were not only interested in our plight but they also promised us their support to the extent possible. One of these gentlemen (Vissering) provided us with letters of introduction to American financial circles but also to Dutch-American society . . . .<sup>50</sup>

One of the letters from Vissering was addressed to a Mr. L. Kiesing of New York. It read in part:

I come to you this time with a unique request. In the Ukraine, the very heart of Russia, a large colony of doopsgezinden exists, at least 100,000 souls, who are of Dutch origin (die van Hollandschen oorsprung zijn). They also still speak a kind of Dutch dialect among themselves mixed with Low German . . . .<sup>51</sup>

Quite apparently, now that repatriation to Germany was no longer an option, the members of the *Studienkommission*, not only in their dealings with their fellow Dutch Mennonites, but with all authorities (had they said something else to their Swiss and German brothers while in their midst?) identified themselves as descendants of the Dutch. There was no equivocation, not even by Benjamin Unruh. With Germany not only defeated, but facing internal revolt, disintegration, and huge reparations payments to her former enemies, it was apparently once again more advantageous to be Dutch than German, especially if one wished to be repatriated to the Netherlands<sup>52</sup> or migrate to Canada or the United States.

By November, 1920 Benjamin Unruh was back in Holland. On the 11<sup>th</sup> he wrote A. A. Friesen, who had remained in North America, from The Hague. Through the good offices of Dr. Kuiper, he had been invited to meet with a Mr. Loder, a high government official. In preparation for that meeting, Unruh wrote Friesen, he had written Loder informing him about the *Studienkommission* and "pointing out that *as a branch of Netherlandisch origin* [my emphasis] we might possibly be able to count on the Dutch government's assistance in establishing contact with the English authorities; I requested such an authoritative recommendation from him."<sup>53</sup> Loder, himself a Mennonite, had responded from a purely juridical point of view, however, saying:

... But you are a Ukrainian, not a Hollander. Your Great Grandfather was a Hollander; but that was a little long ago. You don't speak Dutch; that your dialect is permeated with elements of the Dutch language proves your Dutch

ancestry, but you are a citizen of the Ukraine. Our state as state can do nothing for foreign citizens. We cannot even do anything for the Boers who, after all, have remained completely Dutch.

In the end, however, Loder did provide Unruh with an official, though personal, introduction to a representative of the English government. It read:

Dear Sir Donald,

Will you allow me to introduce to you Mr. Unruh, a Mennonite future Clergyman of Halbstadt, Taur., South Russia, belonging to a there living population of Dutch origin.

Respectfully Yours,  
Loder.<sup>54</sup>

Unruh then continued to inform Friesen of all the negotiations he had entered into in Holland. He indicated that he had repeatedly talked of the Mennonites' "holl. Ursprung": (Dutch origin). Indeed, at this point in time and in this place even Benjamin Unruh seems to have been persuaded, and persuaded all others, that he and the Russian Mennonites were of "Dutch," not Germanic, origin.<sup>55</sup>

About a year later B. B. Janz requested permission from the Ukrainian authorities to allow Mennonites displaced during the preceding years of turmoil to emigrate. Such permission was to be granted as soon as Orié Miller should have arrived with foreign aid. The permission was later retracted, however; the authorities arguing that before anyone could emigrate, Mennonites would have to prove that there actually was a country out there willing to accept them.<sup>56</sup> As a consequence, beginning on 20 November, 1921, B. B. Janz began writing letters to various governments requesting that Russian Mennonites be granted permission to enter their countries as immigrants. The first letter was written to the President of the United States. The second, dated 22 December, 1921, was sent to the Dutch government. A third, dated 23 December, 1921, was sent to the Canadian government. All three emphasized the Dutch origin of the Russian Mennonites. In the first letter Janz wrote:

With the exception of a very small percentage, which we are unable to determine precisely, the Russian Mennonites are of Dutch ancestry, even though they have largely relinquished the Dutch dialect over a 400 year period of time. To all these positive characteristics of the Dutch nature they have added a good amount of German education and scientific knowledge.<sup>57</sup>

To the Queen of Holland he wrote requesting repatriation to the Netherlands, their "old homeland." It had been, he said, some 400 years since their forefathers had left Holland. And then he observed:

"Even though we sought diligently and continuously to prove that we were not really German but of Dutch descent," the Russian government had not believed them. Only on 29 January, 1917, he continued,

were we enabled, by means of a petition directed to the highest echelons of government, handed directly [to the Tsar] through the mediation of a Minister, to prevent the liquidation of our mother colonies in the Molotschna and Chortitza Districts, because the Tsar wrote on the petition in his own hand: "The liquidation of Mennonite lands is to be halted immediately until their claim to be of Dutch ancestry has been thoroughly investigated."<sup>58</sup>

And to the Canadian government Janz wrote: "It is at least 400 years since our forefathers left their homeland in Holland in order to settle in the Kingdom of Poland."<sup>59</sup> Prussia was not even alluded to.

On 15 February, 1922 A. A. Friesen also wrote to the US president appealing on behalf of his fellow Russian Mennonites. The latter, he wrote,

... are nearly all of Dutch origin and they still use a Dutch dialect in their homes. Their character, their names, as also their habits and morality betray their origin.

In the middle of the sixteenth century they left their native land for Poland. As a result of the division of Poland in 1772 some became Prussian subjects, but as early as 1789 most of them, together with the Polish Mennonites, accepted the invitation of the Russian Empress, Catherine II, to settle on the prairies of South Russia, where they established flourishing colonies favorably known throughout the Empire.<sup>60</sup>

Clearly, in the matter of the Dutch origin of the Russian Mennonites, every member of the *Studienkommission* was, at least thus far, agreed. On occasion, an anti-German, anti-Prussian sentiment might even have been detected.

Meanwhile, back in the Ukraine, B. B. Janz was busy negotiating with the Kharkov Communist authorities for the establishment of an indigenous Mennonite relief and redevelopment organization. At the same time, he continued to appeal to them to permit the displaced and landless Mennonites to emigrate. Another petition of this kind was submitted on 17 December, 1921. Rather than simply grant permission for the latter to leave, however, the authorities set up a special commission to investigate the matter in order to determine the veracity of Janz's contentions. The commission consisted of two persons: Makar, a member of the All Ukrainian Executive Committee of the Communist Party, and a lawyer named Romanovsky. The two visited the various Mennonite villages and listened to Mennonite complaints against local party functionaries. Janz apparently attended the sessions. Nothing was ever done by the central authorities about these complaints; however, the offended

local authorities responded with an article, dated 17 February, 1922, in the local Communist paper: *Hammer and Sickle*. According to B. B. Janz, the article attacked "in a hateful manner" the Mennonites' "Holländerei," that is, their attempt during the war to prove their Dutch ancestry in order to avoid the consequences of the liquidation laws.<sup>61</sup>

After the locals had had their say, it was Makar's turn to weigh in. He did so in an article in the official Kharkov party publication *Communist*, entitled: "Kto takie Mennonity?" ("Who are the Mennonites?"). Quite apparently, even the Communist party knew of Peter Braun's pamphlet; and Makar's piece was a kind of sarcastic response to it. John B. Toews has described the article's contents as follows:

... it [the article] seemed to portray the official findings of the investigation commission ... The verdict was not good. Makar charged the Mennonites with hypocrisy and inconsistency. While claiming an inheritance in the world to come, they were enjoying more than their share of earthly happiness since the majority of them were well-to-do. Similarly their nonresistance had been compromised by the *Selbstschutz* episode as well as by the large quantity of arms confiscated from them.<sup>62</sup> Benevolence and generosity, basic teachings of their religion, had not been put into practice.<sup>63</sup>

B. B. Janz and Philip Cornies must have sent a copy of Makar's piece to Peter Braun for his response.<sup>64</sup> He acknowledged the "gift" on 6 August, 1922. No doubt, they, as well as Braun himself, recognized clearly enough that this was a not-so-veiled attack on Braun's 1914/1915 "Who are the Mennonites?" In his answer to Janz and Cornies, Braun wrote: "I have received and read the article *with the familiar title*: 'Who are the Mennonites?' But one cannot answer it; at least I do not wish to do so. Nor do I believe it would serve our cause to do so . . . ." Braun proceeded to mention Makar's name as the author and argue that the latter, as lawyer, investigating judge and communist, was clearly infallible. Any attempt to refute his arguments would simply come back to haunt the Mennonites. Nor did he, Braun, have the necessary material at hand to do so in any case. Furthermore, the sarcastic and hateful tone of the article was enough to condemn it in the eyes of fair minded persons. The best thing to do would simply be to ignore the entire affair in the hope that it would soon fade into oblivion ("wenn sie einfach totgeschwiegen wird," ). If anything, one might send the piece to Benjamin Unruh so that an answer – but not a coolly objective one – could be given in a foreign press where it would have the potential to embarrass the communists who had so very publicly defended the equality of nations and the rights of minorities outside of Russia. He concluded: "Yes indeed, theory and praxis! These people, too, preach water and drink wine, and that not very correctly."<sup>65</sup> By his use of the word "too"

Braun seemed to imply that the communists were no better than the Mennonites in this regard.

On the day the *Hammer and Sickle* article appeared, Willink, a representative of the Dutch Mennonites, arrived in the colonies. That very evening an important meeting took place, attended by Willink, to decide on emigration. Three persons were asked to address the pros and cons of emigration at the meeting: Johann Willms on economic prospects if they remained in the Ukraine; a Dr. Dueck on future social and moral conditions; and Ph. Cornies on the major events that had brought the Mennonites to this fork in the road. Cornies listed three reasons in the following order: 1) the government's land liquidation laws; 2) the attack on the Mennonites by the Russian intelligentsia; 3) the attack by the Russian people themselves, especially in the form of the Makhno hordes. Those present also recalled their own responsibility for these events, their sins of omission and commission. But no matter the fault, the Mennonite sojourn in Russia was declared to have come to an end. When the vote was taken on whether to stay or leave, not a single vote was cast for remaining in the land. The Rubicon had been crossed; there was no turning back.<sup>66</sup>

On 27 April, 1922 B. B. Janz wrote Benjamin Unruh from Kharkov that the Mennonite relief and redevelopment agency had been forced to delete the word "Mennonite" from its name; it had therefore been registered under the name, *Verband Bürger Holländischer Herkunft* [Union of Citizens of Dutch Descent].<sup>67</sup> On 14 May, 1922 Unruh responded, saying:

If I may be open about it, I must say I regret the name of your organization. It is, of course, a fact that a large percentage of the Russian Mennonites originally came from the Netherlands. But that our Dutch ancestry, or – stated more precisely – the Dutch ancestry of a part of our congregations, should be so publicly inscribed as on a flag for all to see can lead to some very disagreeable consequences. In Berlin, at least, our situation has now become exceedingly more difficult. The *Studienkommission* has always and everywhere emphasized that *we are not ashamed of our home in the Netherlands* [my emphasis – Why should they have been ashamed?]. But that we had to defend ourselves was proof of the fact of a somewhat aroused sentiment against us [in Russia]. In Germany one is well aware of that notorious petition of Braun and Thiessen during the period of the land liquidation. It is discussed in the 1922 issue of the *Jahrbuch des Vereins für das Deutschtum im Ausland* in a most spiteful manner. In the highest official circles one speaks of a Judas disposition [among the Mennonites]. We had no option but to attempt to explain the matter.<sup>68</sup> That submission was an unforgivable transgression of authority; its consequences cannot yet be assessed. The name of our organization will irritate.

It is to be lamented that the organization does not bear the simple name "Verband der Mennoniten in Russland." The authorities probably did not want it so named. The name Mennonite in Russia, however, was never only a con-



fessional designation, but a juridical one. Should you not have exerted more pressure in this regard?

In any case, that title will cause us great difficulties. I have no doubt of that. We would counsel you to do everything possible to maintain good relations with the other colonists. Exclusive politics must be avoided at all costs. We do not sacrifice our autonomy at any price, however. You don't know enough about the events of 1917 . . . .<sup>69</sup>

The above quotation makes it appear that Unruh, in his negotiations with the German government in Berlin as the European representative of the *Studienkommission*, had been chided, perhaps even castigated, for the Russian Mennonites' "Holländerei." And yet, in his *Die Auswanderung*, he lists only one incident in which this occurred. It took place during his visit to Berlin in mid September of 1921 to meet with Alexander Fast and Johann Esau on matters relating to Mennonite emigration. While there he met with Privy Counselor Jung who dealt with German aid to the Eastern lands. In his report on the meeting to A. A. Friesen Unruh wrote, encouraging the latter to inform Jung on American relief work in those regions:

I ask urgently that you do it. We would regret it later on if we were to bypass the Imperial Office of Immigration. In any case, bad seed has already been scattered against the Mennonites by a number of persons. Mr. J. came to speak on the Dutch origin issue with a considerable amount of agitation, but calmed himself when I pointed to the historical fact that a large percentage of our congregational membership in fact had their origin in the Netherlands. On the other hand, our *Studienkommission* is everywhere held in high esteem and trusted. We must not abuse that.<sup>70</sup>

This appears to have been the only time the issue came up in Unruh's discussions with representatives of the German government. At least he does not mention any other occasion in his manuscript and other writings available. If that is in fact the case, then he did not honestly represent the reality of the matter to Janz and exaggerated it for his own immediate "political" purposes. This is also the case with regard to his reference to the *Jahrbuch des Vereins für das Deutschtum im Ausland*. There, in Section #6, entitled "Sowjetrussland," we read:

Confessional convictions quite often proved to be stronger than their [the Russian colonists'] common membership in the same race. In the various phases of WWI – like the occupation period – Mennonites, Lutherans and Catholics at times worked more against than with one another. When they were in danger of being resettled in 1915, Mennonites went to such extremes in an address of devotion to the Tsar, in which they referred to themselves as "Hollanders," (as the result of a certain mixing of blood with Dutch Mennonites who had joined them) that they declared: "We have nothing to do with the blood of these wretched people." (NB of the Germans!)<sup>71</sup>

The article then proceeded to tell of a meeting of the representatives of these German congregations in April of 1918 when the German troops had begun to march into the Ukraine. That occupation had produced a change in attitude of the Mennonites for the better. The result of this conference, known as the "Prischib Resolutions," was that the colonists of German background had seceded from the Russian state and placed themselves under the supremacy of the German Empire. Then, as we noted above, the author proceeded to describe the "Winkler Plan" with its recommendation to create an autonomous colonist state under German protection in the Crimean peninsula.

It has to be obvious from these two passages that, at the very least, Unruh was both exaggerating and misstating the facts. Unruh's encounter with Privy Counselor Jung, on the basis of his own recording of what went on, deals with the matter in very general terms. There was obviously no mention of Braun/Thiessen or the 1916/1917 submissions to the Tsar. Neither did the *Jahrbuch* author so much as mention the date 1916/1917, and if he did not he cannot have referred, nor does he, to the Braun/Thiessen submission to the Tsar of December, 1916. Instead, the author, like Privy Counselor Jung, probably referred to the events of the summer of 1915 "when they [the Mennonites] were in danger of being resettled." Both references may therefore be to the general petitions handed in to the government by the Melitopol Mennonite landowners who met in the summer of 1915 to voice their objection to the liquidation laws, elected H. J. Braun as their plenipotentiary, and sent petitions, individually and directly, to the Tsar. Whether H. J. Braun, as their representative, had a hand in writing the general petition is not known. He may very well have. However, neither the passage in the *Jahrbuch* nor Unruh's account of the Berlin meeting in 1921 mentions his name nor even that of his brother Peter or his *Kto takie Mennonity*. Both refer only to the "Dutch argument" used by the Mennonites, and the *Jahrbuch* article quotes the line: "We [the Mennonites] have nothing to do with the blood of these wretched people." The author could probably have read such a statement in any number of Russian newspaper accounts during the war.

Unruh's exaggeration and twisting of the facts had a purpose, and that purpose had to do with the Mennonites' *Deutschtum*.<sup>72</sup> In his exchange with A. A. Friesen on the "Mennonite ideal" of closed colonies, Unruh had told Friesen, as he himself said later, that "it was useless to depart from the path our nature and history had placed us on." Part of that historical path had taken the Russian Mennonites through Polish Prussia where they had, over a period of 400 years, become cultural Germans. Unruh now, in his letter to Janz, took this

historical event and clothed it in the providential garb of Christian theology, in effect canonizing it. Toward the end of the letter he wrote:

Now as Christians we believe that it was God's way with our fathers that they gained access to (became connected to) the German spirit (Geist). We do not want to disavow what Providence has given us through several hundred years of history. That would be both unnatural and impious. One says of the Mennonites that, for them, the end justifies the means. That would be terrible [if true]. Rather be wrong than "political."<sup>73</sup>

What did such an argument have to do with whether or not Russian Mennonites were racially Dutch or German? Intruding Providence into the argument was totally beside the point, rationally speaking. But it had everything to do with Mennonite piety and their cultural sense of who they were. We have seen Peter Braun resolve his own identity crisis (or have it resolved for him) during the World War and its aftermath. But he did not do so within the context of religious/pietistic categories. It would be *unfrom* (impious), Unruh said, to deny that Providence had led them to become cultural Germans. Accidents of national origin had made them Dutch; but Providence had led them to gain access to the German spirit: to become cultural Germans. From a pietistic point of view, the second was immeasurably more important than the first. Did Unruh really believe this, or was he just rationalizing the position he had held all along? And what about this "playing politics" with respect to the Dutch/German debate?<sup>74</sup>

In a letter to Peter Braun of 18 June, 1926, Unruh wrote that he rejected all romanticism, even in the matter of Mennonite emigration. History, he asserted, would justify such an attitude. He continued: "That our leaders at that time [1914-1920] fluctuated between 'Holländerei' and 'Germanomania' was as destructive then as their 'all or nothing' with regard to the issue of emigration today. One has to maintain an historical perspective."<sup>75</sup> Now, it was particularly Unruh who called the Russian Mennonites' use of the "Dutch argument" both political and opportunistic, and he did so repeatedly. In the above letter to B. B. Janz and the one to Peter Braun of 1926, he criticized, though in much gentler terms, those who played the "German card" in 1918. He, as Chairman of the *Mennozentrum*, however, had taken the *via media*, the middle course, and dealt "soberly" with the issues of the day. Had he really? Or was he deceiving himself? He may indeed have done so if we allow Winkler and his plans to constitute the "Germanic" extreme, as Unruh would have us do. But if we reject this extreme as an aberration as the Mennonites themselves, with the exception of Johann Willms, did in 1918 and allow only the two poles of the argument to stand – that is, the Dutch and the German – then Unruh's argument

becomes misleading. Indeed, then he is forced to take his place where he belongs: on the "Germanic" side. And that is in fact where he himself took his stand, even when that *Deutschtum* came to be closely associated with Nazi ideology in the 1930s.<sup>76</sup> And it was during those early Nazi years (1935/1936) that he began his "academic," "scientific" investigations into the Mennonite *Herkunftsfrage*.<sup>77</sup>

The Russian Mennonites living in Siberia appear not to have undergone a similar battle over the *Herkunftsfrage*. There are probably two main reasons for this. First, there were virtually no young people who had studied in Germany living there. And, second, German troops never got beyond the Ukraine and so Siberian Mennonites never came into contact with them. Their emphasis on the Dutch origin of the Russian Mennonites can be seen from a letter, written on 12 January, 1920, by a J. J. Hildebrandt to the "pastor of the Mennonite congregation in Amsterdam" on behalf of his fellow Siberian Mennonites. Hildebrandt reported that at a conference representing all Siberian Mennonites, held on 12 July, 1920, they had decided to leave Russia and were enlisting their Dutch brothers' help. They hoped, Hildebrandt observed because of their experiences during and after the war in Russia, to resettle in a "nation with which we have a racial and religious kinship." There was no doubt in their minds that their forefathers had left the Netherlands due to the persecution under "Granvelle and [the Duke] of Alba." And they were convinced that, of all the European nations, Holland had had, over the last 300 years, the most peace-loving government. They were also aware, however, that there was no room for them in Holland proper, so they had chosen a Dutch colony, Surinam, for their future home. They were surprisingly familiar with their own history and it was obvious that they had done their research on the matter of Holland and its colonies. In the very lengthy letter Germany was not mentioned once; it also indicated that the Siberian group had had no contact with its South Russian brothers and sisters since the outbreak of the civil war. There appears to have been no division whatsoever in their midst over the issue of origins; they were decidedly of Dutch, not German, extraction.<sup>78</sup>

Within a few years of his return to Europe from America not only was Unruh living in Germany, but so were H. J. and Peter Braun.<sup>79</sup> The former protagonists had reassembled, but under very different circumstances. Benjamin Unruh, professor at the Polytechnic University in Karlsruhe since 1922 and the European heart and soul of the Russian Mennonite emigration movement, had position, power and prestige. H. J. Braun, the plenipotentiary of a group of some 100 Mennonite families seeking exit from Russia, had much less power and, in terms of status, was being shunted aside by the official members of the

**Studienkommission.** Peter, however, had lost everything: position, health, even the means of livelihood.

H. J. Braun arrived in Germany about mid June, 1922 from Halbstadt via Batoum and Constantinople. He took up temporary residence with his youngest brother, Abraham, in Oberursel, Taunus, just outside of Frankfurt a/M, where the latter was the manager (*Geschäftsleiter*) of the *Deutsche Mennoniten Hilfe*, the German Mennonite relief agency. By late 1924 or early 1925, Peter Braun and his family had also arrived. His family, too, settled in Oberursel, but Peter himself entered a sanatorium for about a year to seek to recover from his illness. Given Unruh's lengthy stay in Basel during his student days, his marriage to the daughter of a prominent South German Mennonite family and his strong inclination to *das Deutschtum*, his settling in Karlsruhe was natural enough. H. J. Braun, too, had studied in Germany, but in the Hamburg Baptist Seminary where he does not appear to have absorbed a strong pro-German sentiment.<sup>80</sup> At any rate, in the Ukraine he had been the most powerful proponent of the "Dutch argument." Perhaps his lands, the press, and the concern for "his people," overwhelmed any pro-German sentiment he may have had. Peter, however, had at the most spent one brief summer at the University of Leipzig. He was the one who had made the intellectual/historical case for the "Dutch argument" in his *Kto takie Mennonity* which gave it lasting literary form. But the war years, the revolutionary turmoil, Makhno and the Communist terror, as well as the presence of German troops in the Molotschna in the summer of 1918 had, as we have seen, transformed him into an ardent advocate of *das Deutschtum*. He confirmed this in one of his last letters to J. H. Janzen, where he wrote:

... I can most vividly imagine the feelings that oppress, and must oppress you as a German in a racially alien state. I suffered terribly in Russia from the very same feelings. Until the World War I felt that I was a Russian citizen; Germany was a foreign country to me. But with the war came one thing after another. The Russian intelligentsia accused us in the press of being traitors and reviled us; the government refused to come to our defense – instead it passed the land liquidation laws in order to drive us out of house and home; and during the revolution and the Makhnovschina even the common people turned against us; from my discussions with the soldiers, who, of course, were also sons of farmers, and from the attitude [toward us] of the surrounding Russians, it became crystal clear to me: this Russian farmer will not rest, even though he carries no personal animosity, until he has harried the last German from his land and taken his place on it. In this fashion, the government, the intelligentsia and the people had come to oppose us; we, however, had become strangers, indeed exiles. At that point I drew the consequences. I told myself: Russia is no longer my fatherland, for it has rejected me, I therefore no longer have any obligations to this country. There is only one country that can be home, fatherland and protector to me – that is Germany! Had I, at the time,

had the opportunity, I would have, without a moment's hesitation, become a *Reichsdeutscher*. Later a lucky star actually brought me to Germany, and Germany accepted me with open arms, as its legitimate son – even as a hopelessly sick person incapable of working . . . .<sup>81</sup>

To understand the increasing tension between Benjamin Unruh and H. J. Braun, tensions that appear to have exacerbated their differences regarding the Dutch/German debate, one needs to understand the conditions under which H. J. Braun came to Germany. He had left Halbstadt on 9 January, 1922 and arrived in Constantinople on 14 March. B. F. Stolfuss wrote Levi Mumaw and Orie Miller regarding his arrival on the 15<sup>th</sup>, stating that Braun hoped to leave for Germany just as soon as possible.<sup>82</sup> From Constantinople Braun wrote his "Die Hoffnungslose Lage der Mennoniten in Russland" (The Hopeless Condition of the Russian Mennonites), published in the *Mennonitische Rundschau* already on 3 May, 1922,<sup>83</sup> and several letters to A. A. Friesen indicating his commission and the urgent need to get the Mennonites out of Russia. In the first of these, Braun described – in words reminiscent of the piece about to appear in the *Rundschau* – the catastrophic conditions in Russia and begged for quick action on the part of the *Studienkommission* on their behalf. Between this first letter of 22 March, 1922 and the second of the 27<sup>th</sup>, Braun apparently met with Heinrich H. Schroeder who was in Constantinople for several years and discovered from him that members of the *Studienkommission* had been negotiating with the Paraguayan government regarding immigration to that country for some time already. Clearly upset about what he had been told, Braun wrote A. A. Friesen on the 27<sup>th</sup>:

Now that Mr. Schroeder has been able to obtain copies of the correspondence concerning Paraguay,<sup>84</sup> I cannot do otherwise than immediately to write to you again. Had we known in Russia that such a door had already been so wide open to us the hundreds of families that are awaiting an answer from me would already be on their way [out]. They as well as I, A. A., can stay no longer; we must leave. Now I would very much like to hear your personal and objective judgment about Paraguay as well as – or have you not yet been there? – Mexico. Please! In those letters I can see no negative aspects [to the country].

Braun indicated he had already acquired McRoberts' address,<sup>85</sup> but did not know whether he would write to him since he wished first to discuss the matter in Germany with the representative of the *Studienkommission* in order to avoid any possible misunderstanding.<sup>86</sup>

On 17 April, 1922, Stolfuss wrote A. A. Friesen that "Heinrich Braun . . . who arrived in Constantinople the latter part of February [not the date he had given in his earlier letter] has recently received an official permit from Germany to enter that country."<sup>87</sup> He arrived in Germany

on 20 May, 1922. There he nearly immediately participated in a meeting of the *Deutsche Mennoniten Hilfe* held in early June, where he must have met and spoken with B. H. Unruh.<sup>88</sup> Unruh probably told Braun at least two things at that meeting: first, with regard to Paraguay the same thing he had written B. B. Janz only a few days earlier, that "In regard to the matter concerning Paraguay, we must for the moment proceed cautiously. We cannot expect any financial aid from the Paraguayan government since that state's finances are utterly chaotic. Only in conjunction with the financial help of some other organization could we go there."<sup>89</sup> The second thing he probably told Braun was what he wrote to Friesen on 19 June, 1922, after the Oberursel conference: "I know from reliable sources that people back home are very upset about the 'separate' action taken by this group."<sup>90</sup> In other words, Braun should step aside and let the *Studienkommission* handle matters.

No sooner had the conference ended than H. J. Braun, on 17 June, wrote through Unruh as secretary to the other members of the *Studienkommission*. He was plenipotentiary "of those Russian Mennonites," he informed them, "who, already in December of 1921, through the good offices of the *Deutsche Fürsorgestelle für Kriegs-Zivilgefangene in Charkow* (German Welfare Center for War and Civil Prisoners in Kharkov) had applied for entry permits to Holland through the *Commissie van Buitenlandsche Nooden van Doopsgezinden in Nederland* (Dutch Doopsgezinde Commission for Foreign Needs). Originally sent to the Foreign Office in Berlin, the petitions had there been rejected by the German government and sent on to the Dutch Mennonite organization. He had discovered, in a meeting with Unruh, however, that the Dutch government did not allow entry to groups of people either. To this original group, Braun asserted, had now been added some 600 other families for whom he spoke. He therefore requested that the original list of persons be forwarded to him so that he might, with the *Studienkommission's* help, effect their settlement in a land that would accept them."<sup>91</sup>

Nothing appears to have come of H. J. Braun's efforts at this time except an exchange of letters between Friesen and Unruh in which they agreed to isolate and neutralize Braun. The latter refused to give up, however. On 4 March, 1924 he boarded the steamer *Antonio* and sailed for South America. On the 5<sup>th</sup> he wrote Friesen from aboard ship:

*Grüss Gott!* You will be surprised to receive a letter from me from aboard ship in a matter that affects you so closely.

Privately, but with the knowledge of the head of the *Studienkommission* in Germany, I am traveling to South America to study settlement possibilities. My journey will take me to Uruguay first and then to Paraguay. My reports, as objective as possible, will be sent to the members of our *Studienkommission* in

order to keep them abreast of everything. I shall not seek to draw attention to myself; [my trip is made solely for the purpose] that people will know what the conditions are since so many [Russian Mennonites] desire to settle somewhere in the South.

Descriptions of my travels, which I intend to publish, will have the purpose of entertaining and educating young and old alike as well as to help cover travel expenses.

In this latter regard, please forward the enclosed letter to the *Mennonitische Rundschau* with an offer of such articles.<sup>92</sup>

On 13 May, 1924 he wrote a five-page letter to Unruh on his first impressions of Uruguay from Montevideo,<sup>93</sup> and in September of 1924, well after his return home, Braun sent in a lengthy report on his findings regarding settlement possibilities for the Mennonites in Uruguay, Paraguay, and Argentina.<sup>94</sup> But the lengthy letter and the subsequent report never saw the light of day nor does it appear that Friesen forwarded Braun's enclosed letter to the *Rundschau*. Whether H. J. Braun's report played any role in the later 1929, 1930 migration of Mennonites to Paraguay is not known at this time.<sup>95</sup>

Upon his return to Germany, H. J. Braun pursued an entirely different profession, leaving a life of service to the Russian Mennonites largely behind him. Already during his Hamburg seminary days he had taken a course to prepare himself to be a medical orderly and had undergone an examination by a military doctor. Shortly after coming home to Russia he took a course in the art of Swedish massage at the main hospital in Odessa. He also took a course as army surgeon, though because of his wife's illness, he was not able to complete it. In the midst of his many-sided activity in Russia he read books on homeopathy, nature medicine, and vision therapy. He also always kept his own pharmacy and so it was natural for him, now in Germany, to become a *Heilpraktiker* (a homeopath). In order to get his license to practice, Braun traveled to Berlin (more than likely before his South American trip) to study at the Orthey Institute, taking courses in pathology, the diagnosis of vision and diseases. In December, 1924 he opened his first practice in Bochem, moved to Biedenkopf in 1929, Osthofen in 1931, and finally to Nierstein in 1937 where he remained until his death in 1946. In those early years between 1924 and 1930 he also became heavily involved in the Lutheran Pietistic Barmen School Organization [Evangelische Schulgemeinde]. Under their auspices he delivered numerous lectures on the Russian Mennonite school system as well as on the life of the "German" colonists in Russia. What is fascinating about these lectures is the way in which Braun now changes his terminology with regard to the Russian Mennonites in the midst of a German audience. A number of the lectures are contained in his *Nachlass*, and



in them he changes the original emphasis on the "Dutch" background of the Russian Mennonites he had stressed so heavily in Russia, to an emphasis on their relationship to the Germans. Words are actually crossed out and others written in as though he had given the talk with its original "Dutch" emphasis but then realized that such terminology would not be enthusiastically received by his German audience. For example, the original title of one – "Das Schulwesen der alt-evangelischen Taufgesinnten, Mennoniten in Russland" (The School System of the Old Evangelical Anabaptist Mennonites in Russia) – was changed (crossed out) to read: "Das Schulwesen unserer deutsch-evangel Stammesbrüder" (The School System of our German Evangelical Racial Brothers). The term "Mennoniten" is changed to "Kolonisten-Gemeinden" [Colonist Congregations].<sup>96</sup> In another talk, however, given on a different occasion, entitled: "Aus dem Leben & Erleben der Mennoniten in Russland" (Out of the Life and Experiences of the Russian Mennonites), he speaks of the Mennonites as "the Dutch branch of medieval Anabaptism that had been transplanted to Holland from Switzerland." In a letter to a leading teacher of the organization he wrote, on 19 September, 1929, once again emphasizing the Germanic:

I return today to the topic we recently touched on: *das Deutschtum* in foreign countries. As you know, I am myself a colonist son; that is why I have such an interest in the topic. Already in 1803 my grandfather emigrated from West Prussia [earlier it would have been from "Poland"] to Russia and settled, with many of his co-religionists, in the fertile southern steppes of the great (former) tsarist empire. My grandfather, father and I were all born and raised in Russia. After the difficult and disastrous World War and the devastating, bloody Russian revolution, I have now, in 1922 after approximately 120 years, *returned to the home of my forefathers* [my emphasis] and am, along with many other Russian émigrés, a living testimony to how well *das Deutschtum* has maintained itself in Russia over a period of more than one hundred years.<sup>97</sup>

And yet, in his repeated but futile attempts to acquire German citizenship, even during the Nazi years where he had to provide authorities with an *Ahnentafel* to prove the purity of his Arian blood, H. J. Braun continued to argue that the Brauns had come originally from "Holland." In early 1944 he sent yet another application to B. H. Unruh for his advice and assistance. The latter wrote back:

I have read your draft and made some corrections. The Brauns are East Frisians. East Frisia never belonged to "Holland." You have to substitute "Low Countries" for the term "Holland." We have to get away from that primitive Mennonite terminology! It has caused us much harm!<sup>98</sup>

Though Peter Braun, as we have noted, became a much more ardent advocate of *das Deutschtum* during and after World War I, and during the late 1920s and early 1930s even became a proponent of Nazi reforms in Germany,<sup>99</sup> he too appears to have remained true to his "Dutch" theory. For, at some point in late 1932, early 1933, he had the second edition of his *Kto takie Mennonity* translated into German by his nephew, Peter Braun. The son of Jacob Braun, Raduga's accountant, the younger Peter had escaped from Russia in early 1930 but did not remain long in Germany before going on to Brazil.<sup>100</sup> A year later, in the spring of 1932, he was back in Germany. It must have been between his return from Brazil and his uncle's death on 24 September, 1933 that he translated the booklet. From what Benjamin Unruh was to say later, the author hoped to publish the document in German, but he died before that could take place. This would indicate, and there is no evidence to contradict it, that Peter Braun believed that his advocacy of *das Deutschtum* was not in conflict with the "Dutch argument" he had made with regard to Russian Mennonite origins in 1914/1915.

It was a different matter with Benjamin Unruh, however. At the very least, his commitment to *das Deutschtum* drove him to muddy the waters concerning Russian Mennonite origins in order to enhance the German element.<sup>101</sup> And it is significant that by the time he turned his scholarly attention to the issue of origins he had already become an ardent defender of Hitler. On 8 December, 1934, in response to a letter questioning him about the propriety of Mennonites using the Hitler greeting, Unruh wrote:

"Heil Hitler!" means that one wholeheartedly wishes the supreme head of the New Germany well. Believing Christians above all wish him well-being from God, whom the Reich Chancellor and Führer sincerely recognizes, for which we cannot be thankful enough. Think about Stalin! One also sings: "Heil Kaiser (oder König) dir!" "Hitler" is in the dative in the Hitler greeting. Haven't you read 1 Timothy 2: 2? And 1 Peter 12 ff.? Adolf Hitler wants nothing for himself, only all for his people! I honor him from the bottom of my heart; I love him as one can only love a prince ("prince" means the first among his people!). History will reveal what God has given and will yet give to the German people as a whole, also to those in other lands, and also to Europe and the world. Hitler is the great antagonist of Stalin. Heavy burdens lie on his shoulders. Don't quarrel, dear friends, but pray and work! Hitler is fundamentally reasonable and will not interfere in church affairs. That will be done much more by those of lesser character, who do not understand him at all.<sup>102</sup>

Unruh's admiration for and defense of Hitler grew rather than waned over the years. In 1942 he wrote to the S S Obergruppenführer Lorenz in Berlin in support of a government pension for a Frau Selinde Fast, wife of Alexander Fast, who had returned from Canada to be in Ger-

many under Hitler in the expectation that the latter would destroy the Bolsheviks and recapture the former Russian regions in which Mennonites had lived. Their example, said Unruh, "fires up the desire of the Russian Mennonites in Canada and the US to return to the eastern regions." Then, to describe Fast, Unruh asserted: "During the period of the terror he [Fast] organized and led a German citizen-army [Selbstschutz] against the bandits and, with remarkable bravery put his life on the line for his *Volksgenossen* [not his co-religionists]."<sup>103</sup> This from the man who had made such an impassioned defense of nonresistance in 1917 at the General Conference in Lichtenau! He signed the letter, of course, with: "Heil Hitler! B. H. Unruh."

Why should Unruh, who by all accounts accommodated himself to Hitler's regime, and that not reluctantly, have become so uncritical of what has turned out to have been one of the most immoral regimes of all time? Had this "historian of church and dogma" learned nothing from his studies, nothing from his and his co-religionists' Russian experiences? This is not the place for an exhaustive enquiry into this question, but some preliminary observations must be made. There were, first of all, the devastating experiences of the Russian Mennonites under the Bolsheviks beginning with the 1917 revolution. But among the leaders of these Bolsheviks were many Jews. Attention was repeatedly drawn to this fact by both Mennonites and others. Even before the revolution, Karl Lindemann (close friend of H. J. Braun and lecturer on the land liquidation laws in Halbstadt) wrote in his book on the subject, complaining about the fact that he could not get his articles on the land liquidation issue published in the Russian press:

This disease is called 'enjuivement,' 'Verjudung,' 'Jewsation.' All our free press is in the hands of the Jews. Not only Jewish capitalists but also their Jewish journalists control 'Russian public opinion.' At the same time, all Jews are very hostile to the German settlers, due to the competition with them in commercial, industrial and professional sectors. Therefore, the destruction of settlers' capital would bring profit to the Jews. The roots of this rivalry go all the way back to the relations between the Jewish and German colonists in South Russia. In the latter ones, especially, it was a custom to fine anyone (25 rubles) who provided a night's lodging to a Jew. So, it is logical, that Jews established such a strong censorship in the free press, so that even the editors cannot pass a single article that could have any positive reactions towards the German citizens of Russia. Even in Germany, as one French newspaper writes, all the 'theatres are in the hands of Jews, all editors are Jewish, all major presses are Jewish.'<sup>104</sup>

When the Bolsheviks came to power it would have been natural to carry this perspective over to the new movement. Thus Benjamin Unruh's wife, writing in her diary during her husband's absence from Russia after the departure of the *Studienkommission*, observed:

There is quite often talk of peace negotiations between the Reds and Whites, but there appears to be no prospects of peace! To be sure, as long as the Red party does not remove communism from its program, there can be no peace. *If the Jews did not constitute so large a group in the leadership of the Bolshevik party* [my emphasis] it might drop communism. But the former [the Jews] cannot leave off inciting and causing trouble.<sup>105</sup>

Even Peter Braun wrote to Jacob H. Janzen in a letter of 6 July, 1933, just a few months before he died:

Until recently Germany had no immigration laws; as a result all kinds of light-avoiding riff-raff from the East entered the country in large numbers, threatening to destroy the German state. That finally forced the trusting German Michel to sit up and take notice and – not exactly that he attacked the lot, no! With great calm, but also energetically and with strength he said: Now, there is an end to it! We have no need of the un-Germanic spirit which destroys everything, and we don't want it! We wish to remain German! We wish, once more, to be honorable and clean and believing! You Jews prevent us from being that, therefore you may no longer teach our youth and judge our people! You may no longer poison our people in your newspapers and books, in theater and film, etc.! That is the way one must interpret the battle [against the Jews in Germany], and one should understand this in foreign countries . . .<sup>106</sup>

Jews and Anabaptist/Mennonites had had a very similar history of persecution. But here there was no sympathy for the plight of the Jew. Part of the reason for this lay in the fact that the Russian Mennonites who had returned to Germany no longer saw themselves as a *Völklein*, but as a part of the German *Volk*. The concept of *das Deutschtum* had liberated them from their isolation. As part of the German *Volk* they put their own so recent persecution as an ethnic and religious minority behind them.

Another reason has to be factored in, and that has to do with non-resistance. The German Mennonites had given up the principle already in the nineteenth century, leaving the decision for or against nonresistance up to the individual. In 1916, during the war, Hinrich van der Smissen wrote: "We German Mennonites do not seek to hide the fact that we, in our great majority given the German circumstances – while we honor the historic absolute nonresistance of our forebears – cannot nor do we wish to retain it."<sup>107</sup> The Russian Mennonites, however, had left Prussia, beginning in 1789, precisely in order to preserve the principle. And in 1917, Benjamin Unruh himself, at the Lichtenau General Conference, delivered a magnificent defense of the principle. But then came the revolution, the Makhnovschina, the German army, and the *Selbstschutz*. Unruh, among others, gave up the principle, as did H. H. Schroeder, Walter Quiring and even Peter Braun, all of whom eventually

settled in Germany. Perhaps it happened to the others as it happened to Peter Braun; he explained his altered position to his brother Abraham in Germany in his letter of 14 May, 1918 where he wrote of the impact the terror and coming of the German troops had had on him:

What are we to do now? Many of us ask. We have experienced a great deal in the four years of war, suffered a great deal at the hands of the old government, but much more since the coming of the Bolsheviks. These years have – both in me and in many others of us Mennonites – brought about a great change, not only with respect to the principle of our nonresistance, but also in our relationship to Russia . . . <sup>108</sup>

Thus, before ever they arrived in Germany, these Russian Mennonites had given up their nonresistance. The sacrifice of this key “Anabaptist/Mennonite distinctive,” while they fought for an exemption from having to swear an oath of loyalty to the Fuehrer and in the law courts,<sup>109</sup> made the German Mennonites into just another Christian denomination and allowed them to be integrated into the German *Volk*, where *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil) became more important than the faith of their fathers.

But the above may not have been the ultimate reason for Unruh's support of the Nazi regime. We have already seen, in his letter of 1942 to Obergruppenführer Lorenz in Berlin, how he spoke of Fast's return to Germany from Canada as firing up “the desire of the Russian Mennonites of Canada and the US to return to the eastern regions.” For Mennonites to be able to return to these lands, Hitler would have to defeat Stalin, and the above letter makes it apparent that Unruh believed Hitler would do so. In the materials in the *Mennonite Library and Archive* on Unruh collected by Cornelius Krahn there is a letter of 3 March, 1963 from Unruh's daughter, “Mieze,” to Paula, Unruh's second wife, dealing with Unruh's relationship to Hitler. In it she wrote:

. . . In the years 29/33 father was a decided opponent of Hitler and his ideas. From his Christian dogmatic perspective he completely condemned and rejected his racial idolizing (of the German race) and racial rejection (of the Jews). He acknowledged the importance of the Old Testament – Hitler rejected it as a Jewish book. Father's distancing himself from Hitler was maximal particularly in religious matters. He believed in only one task (purpose) for Hitler: the elimination of atheism in the East! . . . That Hitler finally disappointed him, and had to disappoint him lay logically in the latter's unchristian nature.<sup>110</sup>

This familial response to the attacks on Unruh for his collaboration with the Nazis, however, must be seen in the light of Paula Unruh's own letter to “Bds” of 27 February, 1963. There Unruh's second wife wrote that “After reworking certain papers, Benny wisely hid them under a

table, many of which he himself set on fire in the stove; and because of being forced to evacuate and flee his home he lost the most important papers in his archive after World War II."<sup>111</sup> If this is true, and there is no reason to doubt it, then the statement by Unruh's daughter that Unruh's differences with Hitler were only of a religious nature must be discounted. But her argument that Unruh saw Hitler's purpose to be the destruction of the Bolshevik's communistic-atheistic empire rings true. When combined with Unruh's letter to Obergruppenführer Lorenz of 21 September, 1942, it appears that Unruh was convinced that Hitler's God-ordained purpose was the destruction of Stalin and Russian communism.<sup>112</sup> If this was so, how could he oppose the Führer? Furthermore, Hitler's success would allow the former Russian Mennonites in Canada, the United States and South America to return to the Ukraine. For that to happen, Unruh appears to have been willing to compromise on important religious principles in order to have Hitler achieve – not what God had ordained, as it turned out – but what Unruh had convinced himself was God's purpose for Hitler.<sup>113</sup> Once again, however, Unruh's predestination beliefs betrayed him. Hitler's actions led instead to the destruction of Germany and the consolidation of an atheistic communism in Russia, at least for nearly another fifty years.<sup>114</sup>

In previous instances Unruh had applied his views on predestination to the past history of the Russian Mennonites; in particular to the transformation of the Dutch Mennonites in Prussia into cultural Germans. It was difficult to counter his argument in that instance. In the case of Hitler, however, Unruh applied it to the future: to Hitler's purpose in history. If his predestination theology failed him here, and it clearly did as even his daughter conceded, why should the historian trust it in its application to past phenomena?

## The “Völklein” and the “Volk”: Repatriation, Emigration, and a Shifting National Identity

*We are Germans and want to be Germans. Our nationality is God-given. It is therefore our duty to hold it high, all the more so under present circumstances . . . Our German nature has placed a peculiar stamp on our Christianity, and that, in particular, is what has made it valuable to other nations . . .*

— Declaration of the German Lutheran Church of 1927.

In his 1916 response to C. M. ten Cate's contention that Russian Mennonites were “more Dutch than German,” Hinrich van der Smitten suggested that such a question might well be “debated by experts in the field.” But by the time scholars began to do so, the issue had, at least for those coming out of Russia, become so entangled with differing memories of contentious events in their old homeland – not to speak of the conflicting national perspectives brought to the emerging debate by outsiders – that a dispassionate discussion had become all but impossible. Benjamin H. Unruh, who was to become the most prominent protagonist in the debate, had himself decided to investigate the issue at one of the most contentious moments in Russian Mennonite history. Could he then be impartial? Indeed, had he not already committed himself to a preordained position when he made his decision at the April 1917 Congress of German Colonists in Moscow? Would he even have accepted the results of an impartial, scholarly study? The one Russian Mennonite scholar who might have provided such a study was Cornelius Bergmann because he had been out of the country from well before the war<sup>1</sup> and therefore was not present at the events that generated the debate. Bergmann had not only intended to investigate the problem for his doctoral dissertation at the University of Leipzig but had virtually completed his research when the war broke out in 1914. That war forced him to change his plans, however. He explained in a letter to C. Henry Smith of 16 March, 1922.

At the outset,” he wrote, “I would like to legitimate myself as the author of the *Täuferbewegung im Kanton Zürich* (The Anabaptist Movement in the Zurich Canton). I came to write on this topic by chance. In July 1914, I trav-

eled to Switzerland to complete some last researches on the West Prussian Mennonites (Danzig, Königsberg) in the Swiss archives. There [in Danzig] I had discovered the presence of some Swiss and did not know how they had come to Danzig and Graudenz. For my research dealt with the development of the Mennonites in West Prussia and their partial migration to Russia. From 1910 on I traveled to, and worked in, various archives. I was also able to locate the archival documents containing the first invitations to Mennonites up to 1545 by the cities of Danzig and Elbing; these were unrelated to the invitations that came from Albrecht, Grand Master [of the Teutonic Knights]. While there [in Switzerland], the outbreak of the war caught me by surprise. As a colonist from Russia I could not return to Germany where I had left over 2,000 notes on the material. For that reason I turned to a Swiss topic. Gradually I was able to recover my material, but by then I no longer had any spare time to continue my research and writing. I was forced to take a job since all funds from my homeland had been cut off.

A year ago I was able to return to Germany. Here I met my former school friend, lic. Benjamin Unruh. He regretted that nothing was being done with the material. I regret it too but cannot do anything about it since all my time and efforts are needed to keep body and soul together.

The material is all there. In order to complete everything I still have to do some research in the Berlin archives, and then, for purposes of comparison, make one more trip to Switzerland. If, aside from the necessary time I must spend at my profession, I could devote all my time to this study, I could finish the work in one to one-and-a-half years: that is, in this time I could write the history of the colonization of West Prussia through the Dutch, Frisian and Swiss Mennonites between 1545 and 1850/70.<sup>2</sup>

To be able to free up his evenings, the occasional afternoon, and to complete his research, Bergmann asked Smith if he could not find some \$850.00 for him. He thought this a modest sum, since the monthly wage of a laborer in the US was about \$250.00, not much by anyone's standards. But no money appears to have been sent, and Bergmann never did write his history. Had it been anything like his *Täuferbewegung im Kanton Zürich*, it would have been an outstanding piece of work that might have persuaded Unruh to cease and desist from his plans. Perhaps!

In the above letter Bergmann spoke of Dutch, Frisian, and Swiss Mennonites as having migrated to West Prussia in the early sixteenth century. But according to H. G. Mannhardt, whom Bergmann assisted with important information about archival materials for his 1919 *Die Danziger Mennonitengemeinde* (The Danzig Mennonite Church), the latter had already chosen the following title for his study: "Beiträge zur Geschichte der holländischen Mennoniten in Westpreussen" (Contributions to the History of the Dutch Mennonites in West Prussia).<sup>3</sup> It must therefore be assumed that whatever the number of the Swiss immigrants, in the mind of Bergmann they did not constitute a significant element in the ethnic Mennonite mix in West Prussia. Nor did



they in the mind of the German Mennonite, H. G. Mannhardt, for both in his history of the Danzig congregation and in his article on the same topic in the *Mennonitisches Lexikon*, Mannhardt spoke exclusively of Dutch settlers.<sup>4</sup>

It was not as though Bergmann and Mannhardt were the first Mennonite scholars to have taken an interest in the question. As early as 1854 a young Mennonite student by the name of Johannes van der Smissen wrote a series of articles for the *Mennonitische Blätter* entitled: "Über die ersten Anfänge der Mennoniten in Preussen" (Regarding the Earliest Beginnings of the Mennonites in Prussia). Although he began by admitting that it would probably no longer be possible to determine with any certainty, at least not with the evidence at his disposal, when and from where the first Anabaptists had come to Prussia, van der Smissen nevertheless argued that the preponderance of the evidence pointed in the direction of the Netherlands. Indeed, as early as in a complaint of the Elbing citizens to King Sigismund Augustus of 1550, he noted: "we have an indication from where the present Mennonites came, namely from Holland. And these indicators increase . . ." Thereupon van der Smissen quoted a number of passages from Christoph Hartknoch's 1686 *Presussische kirchen-historie* to make his case.<sup>5</sup> Only a few years later, in 1863, Wilhelm Mannhardt confirmed this opinion in his *Die Wehrfreiheit*. There he wrote:

This development [the acquisition of exemptions], which became an aspect of the expansionist history of the Mennonites, repeated itself in Prussia. *Fleeing the inquisition in the Spanish Netherlands in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century*, they initially suffered persecution in electoral as well as Polish Prussia . . . [my emphasis].<sup>6</sup>

And he continued, throughout the study, to refer to these settlers as Dutch.

Subsequent Mennonite writers, like Anna Brons and P. M. Friesen, relying primarily on Reiswitz and Wadzeck's 1821 *Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Mennonitengemeinden* (Contribution to the Understanding of the Mennonite Congregations) for their information, reiterated this interpretation.<sup>7</sup> Only Friesen, however, took a broader approach to the problem than any of the other historians. On the basis of Hartknoch's church history he spoke of Moravian Brethren<sup>8</sup> coming to Prussia before the Dutch followers of Menno, who first arrived between 1540 and 1549, but with whom they intermingled. It was from them and some "Polish elements," Friesen asserted, that names like "Sawatzky, Koslowsky, Rogalsky, Delesky, Selewsky, Retzlaf or Ratzlaf (Radoslaw?), perhaps even Spenst (Uspensky?)" came.<sup>9</sup> The vast majority, however, had been of Dutch origin.

Aside from authentic documents, still preserved by the Prussian congregations," he continued, "the Dutch origin of the majority of the Prussian Mennonites is proven by their Christian and family names, the family and inheritance ties which still existed between the Prussian and Dutch Mennonites around 1820, Dutch customs and life style, their knowledge of the Dutch language, and Dutch religious books [which our immigrants brought along with them to the Molotschna]. The main proof of their Dutch origin, however, is that the Dutch language was originally used in the church services, in Danzig as late as 1790 . . . ."<sup>10</sup>

But whereas the Prussian Mennonites might have been predominantly of Dutch origin, the Russian Mennonites, as the Prussian Mennonites themselves, had been joined by individuals, and at times entire groups of German Pietists, as in the case of the 1835 Russian Mennonite settlement of Gnadenfeld.<sup>11</sup>

The scholarly opinion, both Mennonite and non-Mennonite, on the matter of the ethnic origin of the Prussian Mennonites was therefore remarkably uniform prior to World War I. This unanimity was punctuated by Felicia Szper's 1913 study entitled *Nederlandsche Nederzettingen in West-Pruisen gedurende den Poolschen Tijd* (Dutch Settlements in West Prussia during Polish Rule).<sup>12</sup> Setting the coming of the Dutch Anabaptists in the sixteenth century into the larger context of Dutch-Prussian contacts, trade, even the occasional settlement, going back to the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Szper sought to determine the date on which Dutch Anabaptists made their first appearance in Prussia and the precise regions in the Netherlands from which they came.<sup>13</sup> And in an appendix she reproduced some twelve documents, beginning with one dated 1555 and ending with another dated 1766, that consistently spoke of these settlers as coming from *Holland*.<sup>14</sup> It is no wonder that Braun and Thiessen cited this study as the last word on the matter (so at least H. H. Schroeder asserted<sup>15</sup>) in their December, 1916 submission to Tsar Nicholas II on the land liquidation issue.

The divided opinion of the Russian Mennonites on this question after the war contrasts sharply with the virtually unanimous verdict of the scholars before the war. We have further noted that when H. J. Braun came to Germany he began, especially in his talks before German audiences, to tone down his emphasis on the Dutch origins of the Russian Mennonites. A particularly interesting example of this national contextualizing of the problem by Russian Mennonites can be seen in Dietrich Neufeld's famous *Russian Dance of Death*. Written from notes made during the Makhno occupation of the Old Colony during the last three months of 1919, and the typhus scourge that followed in its wake, the book was first published in Emden, Germany, in 1921 under the title: *Ein Tagebuch aus dem Reiche des Totentanzes* (A Diary

from the Realm of the Dance of Death).<sup>16</sup> Though Neufeld initially spoke of the Russian colonists as being of "German, Dutch and Swedish descent,"<sup>17</sup> he never again used the term "Dutch" to denote the Mennonite colonists, referring to them consistently as "German" thereafter.<sup>18</sup> Later on, after completing a Ph. D. at the University of Jena in 1922, Neufeld and his young German wife, in 1923, migrated to Manitoba, then nearly immediately moved to Bluffton College, then to Antioch College and in 1928 he came to Claremont, California, where he taught at Pomona College. While there he published, under a pseudonym, an English translation he himself had prepared of his book.<sup>19</sup>

Something must have transpired in the intervening years to change Neufeld's mind about the national origins of the Russian Mennonites, for there was hardly a mention of "Germans" in his English translation. He now spoke consistently only of "Dutch settlers."<sup>20</sup> Neufeld had clearly made a conscious decision to delete the German label from the Russian Mennonites before he began the translation; they were now of Dutch origin. It had been wrong to consider them as having been of German origin, he said.<sup>21</sup> Nor had they had anything to do with the Kaiser's politics.<sup>22</sup> They spoke a Dutch dialect,<sup>23</sup> or even Dutch itself, he asserted.<sup>24</sup> If the German environment modified or even changed H. J. Braun's emphasis, did the Anglo-Saxon environment in Canada and the United States change that of Neufeld? Certainly the first scholarly Mennonite work on these Russian Mennonites in North America, C. Henry Smith's 1927 *The Coming of the Russian Mennonites*,<sup>25</sup> saw them as originating in Holland. He stated: "As early as the middle of the sixteenth century, if not earlier, Mennonite refugees from Holland found their way to the deltas of the Vistula and Nogat in Polish Prussia, upon invitation of ecclesiastical as well as lay noblemen, who were desirous of industrious farmers."<sup>26</sup> On top of that, he remarked a little further on, the Prussian Mennonites, "especially those of the city of Danzig, kept in close social contact with their brethren in Holland until far into the eighteenth century," hanging on to their language and customs as well.<sup>27</sup> But when the Russian Mennonites in Germany began to take up the matter in the early 1930s, the interpretation became much more "Germanic." That change was influenced primarily by two events: the 1929/30 flight of the Siberian Mennonites from Russia via Moscow, and the rise to power of the Nazi party in Germany.

Beginning in 1927, just after the first major wave of Mennonite emigrants had left the country, the Soviet Union instituted new repressive measures along with the ruthless return to a collectivization land policy directed in large part against the "kulaks."<sup>28</sup> Churches were closed, preachers sent to Siberian concentration camps, Sundays as a day of rest abolished, and religious instruction in the schools forbidden. About the

same time the Moscow government virtually ceased issuing passports, forcing Mennonites left behind to remain in the "Red Utopia." Despite these measures, some sixty to seventy Siberian Mennonite families,<sup>29</sup> in early 1929 – partially because of famine conditions created by drought and the government's renewed draconian requisitions policy, but primarily because of what one Slavgorod MB bishop called the announcement in the newspapers on the eve of the new year that "The Slavgorod region shall be freed from preachers during the coming year"<sup>30</sup> – fled to Moscow hoping against hope to find a way out of the country.<sup>31</sup> The audacity of the move caught the authorities off guard. Perhaps in the hope of avoiding world attention, the latter granted passports to the refugees and allowed them, quietly, in June and August to leave the country. Gradually word of their success filtered back to the Siberian Mennonite communities. Once arrived there, however, it spread like wildfire, igniting a burning desire among others to leave. In order not to arouse suspicion among local authorities, many Mennonites began, in the early summer months, quietly to liquidate their personal possessions in order to raise funds to pay for the trip to Moscow. Others simply left their farmsteads after turning their animals out to pasture and boarded trains for Moscow. Before the government knew what was happening, some 900 Siberian Mennonite families, most of them (according to Auhagen) from around Slavgorod, along with several hundred Lutheran and some few Catholic families, had, in July, 1929, gathered outside the gates of Moscow, taking up temporary quarters in cheap hotels and the summer daschas of Moscow residents, until they could wring passports from the authorities.

In Moscow the families made contact, initially, with the Russian-Canadian-American-Passenger Agency which had served Mennonites in their earlier migration. However, when this led nowhere they turned to the various government commissariats and eventually to the German embassy. At the latter they encountered Otto Auhagen, an Agricultural Attaché to the embassy, who took up their cause.<sup>32</sup> On 11 October, in order to motivate his own as well as the Moscow government to action in the matter, Auhagen took two German journalists from the *Kölnische Zeitung* and the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*; and three American journalists from the *International News Service*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and the *Chicago Daily News*; to the outskirts of Moscow to acquaint them with the increasingly desperate condition of the refugees. On 25 October he wrote to B. H. Unruh:

... The Mennonites who have now fled to the outskirts of Moscow number about 900 families. German and American journalists, who visited the quarters of these refugees 14 days ago in my company, have drawn the world's

attention to this disaster, and the Russian government has finally realized that it can no longer deny emigration privileges to these people . . . In any case, it would be most useful if the German press would repeatedly and with great emphasis continue to draw attention to the frightful religious and economic plight of the Mennonites and colonists.<sup>33</sup>

As the result of Auhagen's action, the plight of the Moscow Mennonite refugees became the focus of world attention.<sup>34</sup>

How would the Communist government react under these circumstances? It had defended minority rights in capitalist countries; how would it now treat this minority in its own country? As Benjamin H. Unruh observed in his address to the Second Mennonite World Conference gathered in Danzig in March of 1930 to discuss the plight of the refugees:

All the conflicts, contradictions and dishonesty of the Soviet policy are the result of this basic double program [between a Utopian ideal and a practical political and economic task of the present hour]. For instance, Stalin, so it is said, pays no attention to the judgment of foreign nations. But the same Stalin seeks to cover up with all possible maneuvers of the clever politician what is actually taking place in Russia. In the long run, however, this attempt is bound to fail and it was precisely the flight of the six thousand Mennonites and other farmers out of Russia which tore open the eyes of the outside world to what was actually going on behind the artificially erected scene of the Soviet stage. That is the great political significance of this remarkable flight.<sup>35</sup>

At the height of the flight there were some 13,000 persons outside of Moscow petitioning the Communist government for exit passports. Had it not been caught completely off guard and had the world press not drawn attention to the plight of these pious Christians seeking relief from famine and religious persecution, it would undoubtedly have reacted with brute force. The German press in particular took notice, for the refugees were, after all, of "German" extraction. The German government, however, to judge both from Benjamin Unruh's letters to Peter Braun of the time and its own internal documents, was reluctant to insert itself into the volatile mix for fear of alienating the Soviet government.<sup>36</sup> Unruh himself petitioned the German Foreign Ministry on at least several occasions on the matter, only to be turned down each time. On 9 October he returned from a trip to London and once again headed straight for Berlin. There, as he wrote Braun,

I submitted a major memorandum that Herr von Kuegelgen, as Chair of the Confidential Committee on the Baltics and Eastern German Colonists – of which I am a member<sup>37</sup> – supported. On 13 October a representative of the Foreign Ministry went to Moscow; I could only inform you and Theo [Block] concerning the negotiations in the Foreign Commissariat secretly, under six eyes.

But the result was a complete success for my submission . . . There were very serious negotiations. [The result is] that the people are being allowed out on the basis of lists, without passports . . . Already the first transports are to leave Moscow. I fear that the Moscow government, in its irritation, will simply get rid of them before we have been able to make any arrangements [for their departure] with the CPR [Canadian Pacific Railway]. And where shall those go who are not allowed out? These matters are beginning to overwhelm us financially. Together with Kuegelgen I have asked for a subvention from the Reich [government]. The matter is to be decided today. And I have hope, for we are dealing here with a situation in Moscow that is catastrophic in every respect.<sup>38</sup>

Not until a 9 November, 1929 meeting of the Mueller Cabinet, however, did Foreign Minister Curtius request three million Reichsmark from the German government to help in evacuating the Moscow refugees.

At the same cabinet meeting the Secretary of State reported that President Hindenburg, as honorary president of the German Red Cross, had gotten the Red Cross involved. The Chancellor himself then added that the president of the German *Nothilfe* (Relief Association) was also prepared to help and had suggested that it cooperate with the Red Cross. He suggested further that the League of Nations be requested to become involved, but Curtius declined, arguing that such a request from the German government might alienate the Soviets.<sup>39</sup> The only cabinet member to oppose the motion was the Minister of Finance; he argued that three million marks would surely not be adequate to meet the need. Already, he observed, the number of refugees outside of Moscow had risen to 15,000 persons and a further 18,000 Russians of German descent were becoming restless. In spite of the Finance Minister's opposition, however, the majority determined that the Chancellor should present the proposal to the various party leaders; without endorsement for the moment, however.<sup>40</sup>

On the 14<sup>th</sup> Curtius and Chancellor Mueller presented the matter to the party leaders. They now spoke of 13,000 refugees and a cost of five to six million marks. If the government could bring up these funds, they suggested, those raised by the public at the instigation of Hindenburg, the Red Cross and other agencies could be used to alleviate the problems of other German colonists in Russia. On the other hand, Curtius cautioned that any help they might provide could backfire on them and lead to an even greater number of Germans trying to leave. Nevertheless, the response of the party leaders was overwhelmingly positive, with a number of representatives suggesting a possible settlement of the refugees in Germany's eastern regions under the auspices of the *Fürsorgeverein für deutsche Rückwanderer* (Association for the Care of Returning Germans). Other representatives, as well as Secretary of State Weimann, however observed that the latter organization, at least to the

present, had not performed any practical service in this regard. Others objected to the refugees being sent to Brazil, which had offered to accept them, as being too hot; still others negated this. Representative Stuecklen then made the point that five to six million marks would, at the most, be enough to rescue some 4,000 persons and lodge them at Hammerstein, a military barracks just vacated by the Reichswehr. It was at this point that Curtius insisted that a limited rescue had absolutely to be attempted, if for no other reason than to demonstrate the German government's good will in the matter. But this attempt would have to end the undertaking; it could not be dragged out interminably. He therefore recommended that a commissar with special powers be appointed to take charge of the endeavor. All party leaders agreed, whereupon the Chancellor set the following limits to the project: 1) that the number of persons brought out not exceed the space available in the barracks; 2) that the number of persons be limited to those who had a reasonable possibility of getting out of Russia; and 3) that the project be limited by the funds available. The party leaders then agreed to a sum of five to six million marks.<sup>41</sup> On the 18<sup>th</sup> Curtius reported to the cabinet that six million marks should be requested and that Representative Stuecklen be named commissar to oversee the rescue operations. The cabinet agreed and ordered that Curtius request that amount from the Ministry of Finance at its next meeting.<sup>42</sup>

On 20 February, 1930 the Foreign Minister reported to the cabinet that of the 14,300 refugees only 5,700 had been brought out of Russia; and of the six million marks set aside for the project only three million had been expended. He reported further that the Russian government was doing everything in its power to retain the colonists in the land; that would mean their certain demise, he observed. No doubt, he continued, another emigration wave was in the offing, but Germany could not accept any more refugees. The German ambassador would have to inform them of this. From this point forward only a small relief organization was to be maintained in Germany.<sup>43</sup>

It is impossible to determine to what extent, if at all, these inner governmental negotiations became public knowledge; or even to what extent Unruh knew about the government's initially negative attitude in the matter, although he did know that it acted reluctantly. All the public knew was that Hindenburg, aside from encouraging others to become involved in supporting the rescue mission, had himself contributed some 200,000 Reichsmarks to the public fund on top of the government's contribution of some 6,000,000. Other groups, too,<sup>44</sup> as the *Mennonitische Blätter* reported in its December, 1929 issue, had joined in and issued the following proclamation:

Brothers in Need! A catastrophe has struck the Germans living abroad! Thousands of German farmers, driven by starvation, economic disasters and circumstances of the times, have been forced to flee from hearth and home in Siberia. A migration of starving Germans has begun in Russia!

Ten thousand German farmers, robbed of homes and livelihood, have gathered outside of Moscow in the hope of emigrating overseas by way of Germany; hundreds have already arrived in Germany in a destitute state. Children, women and the elderly are suffering unspeakably. These refugees in Russia have no choice: they must get out, otherwise they are threatened with a return to Siberia and certain death.

These German farmers, who migrated to Russia over a hundred years ago, have created exemplary colonies in Siberia and retained their German characteristics, speech and customs. Now, uprooted from home and livelihood, oppressed emotionally and religiously, they have been abandoned to despair. The fate of one German affects all Germans!

It is for these reasons that organizations, whose names appear below, call on the German *Volk* – despite the dire economic crisis in our own land – to contribute to the fund for our terribly afflicted brothers. We have ourselves experienced starvation. But here it has gripped thousands of banished persons who, at the present time and on top of all the other torments, are exposed to the harshness of the oncoming winter.<sup>45</sup>

The German people responded with a massive outpouring of support, if not money. And the press continued to cover the story as Auhagen had suggested, even to and including the arrival of the refugees at the transition camps and their eventual settlement in Paraguay and Brazil.<sup>46</sup> It should not surprise us, therefore, that Mennonites, long regarded as undesirable sectarians, were grateful to the German people and government. The refugees celebrated thanksgiving services upon stepping onto German soil. They sent letters of thanks to Hindenburg. For it had been Germany, and Germany alone, that had come to their aid. True, Auhagen had pushed from Moscow, even to the extent of mobilizing the world press on behalf of the refugees, and B. H. Unruh had done his part in Berlin. Without the Herculean efforts of these two, the German government might not have acted at all. But the Mennonite refugees and the rest of the world hardly knew this. Nor did it matter much after they had escaped the hell that was the communist workers' paradise.<sup>47</sup> Germany had come to their aid temporarily in 1918; and now it had rescued some 5,700 of them. It is little wonder that Mennonites were grateful. As Christian Neff put it at the 1930 Danzig Mennonite World Conference:

Because of the desperate plight of our Russian brothers, especially the German people have opened their hearts and hands in an unparalleled act of generous assistance. That they [the refugees] should receive help from strangers is an act unique in the history of our brotherhood. For we have always had to make do with the assistance provided by our brothers and sisters.<sup>48</sup>



The Danzig conference also expressed its gratitude to President Hindenburg, the German Red Cross, the Reichstag, and the German nation.

A similar gratitude was everywhere apparent. Writing from Canada to Peter Braun, J. H. Janzen observed:

The German government and the German people have garnered good-will for their generosity extended to our refugees from many well beyond the confines of the *Auslandsdeuschtums*. Here [in Canada] and the United States one now speaks with respect and esteem of the Germans. That may, of course, dissipate again; but that is the way it is today. Our people especially are grateful to Germany and would not wish to see anything done that might irritate or offend her.<sup>49</sup>

Nor, according to a letter of Braun to Janzen of 3 April, 1930, did Benjamin Unruh wish to offend the German government.<sup>50</sup> And in his meetings with the various refugee groups in Hammerstein, Prenzlau and Moelln he must have emphasized the fact that Germany's intervention on their behalf signified the fact that she regarded them as a part of the German *Volk*. They were no longer, if they had ever been, a separate *Völklein*. This was most certainly the message he continued to hammer home to these refugees after they had settled in Brazil and Paraguay.<sup>51</sup> That the Nazi ideology was strongest amongst these refugees is no accident.

Aside from the fact that this event transformed at least the refugees' attitude, if not that of other Mennonites as well, toward *das Deuschtum* – and it should be noted that it had been the Siberian Mennonites as a body that had appealed in 1922 to their Dutch brethren, as to their ancestors, for help – in our immediate context it is also instructive to note that no one, no, not even one person, whether Mennonite or non-Mennonite, referred to these Russian Mennonite refugees as being of Dutch ancestry. They were "Russland-deutsche Bauern," they were German "Stammesgenossen," they were anything but Dutch.<sup>52</sup> Certainly, no one wished to jeopardize the German government's "goodwill" toward them by calling them Dutch; or the goodwill of the German people. These were, as the December, 1929 proclamation called them, "our terribly afflicted brothers." The "fate of one German," it said, "affects all Germans!" It would be "Verrat am Vaterland," at this point to contend for the Dutch label. And so everywhere, where their origins came up for discussion, it was said that they had come out of Prussia just over one hundred years ago to settle in Russia. Their Dutch origins before Prussia were not mentioned even once.

It is probably no coincidence, therefore, that just shortly before B. B. Wiens's "Ein neues Problem" of 31 October, 1934, Heinrich H. Schroeder, another Russian Mennonite studying and then teaching in

Germany after the war, published a short article in *Der Bote* entitled: "Vom Wesen des friesischen Volkstammes"<sup>53</sup> ("Concerning the Essence of the Frisian People"). In it he argued that the Russian Mennonites were predominantly of Frisian extraction, and the latter basically Nordic Germans. Two years later, in 1936, he published his book, *Russlanddeutsche Friesen* (Russian-German Frisians). With a picture of himself clad in Nazi uniform (nothing subtle here), Schroeder prefaced his first chapter with a Hitler quote. It read:

The Germanic races are the God-ordained building blocks of our nation. They are substance of His substance and will therefore last as long as there is a German *Volk*. The political constructs of the various states, however, are the product of the at times good, at other times bad, human actions of the past.<sup>54</sup>

Frisians, Schroeder asserted, were one of these Germanic tribes that belonged to the German *Volk*. It had therefore been a mistake for Russian Mennonites to refer to themselves as a *Völklein*, though his argument was not that of a Jacob H. Janzen. And their attempt to portray themselves as *Holländer* during and after the war had been a purely utilitarian and defensive act. From a nationalistic and *völkisch* perspective, however, such actions were indefensible. For Schroeder, therefore, the *völkisch* (racial) aspect of being a Mennonite was clearly more important than any religious component.<sup>55</sup>

On 5 December, 1934, Schroeder published an article in the *Mennonitische Rundschau* entitled: "Tuempling, Camburg, Saale, Deutschland,"<sup>56</sup> in which he tried to remake Menno into a militaristic defender of German *Lebensraum*, arguing:

Menno Simons or a [Johann] Cornies would most certainly have opposed imperialistic wars, wars that were fought for one or another American oil baron; but they always stood up for the honor of innocent people on German or Frisian soil, and would do so again.

This argument Schroeder then brought into connection with the German people as a "Volk ohne Raum" which, for years, had been forced to defend themselves against surrounding enemies.

Schroeder did not only direct his call to German Mennonites, however; he also directed it to North American Mennonites, for, as he put it,

It is precisely the *Auslandsdeutsche* who have every reason to be grateful to Führer Hitler and the new Germany. For Germany is not only fighting for those in the Reich, but for all the suppressed *Volksgenossen* outside it.<sup>57</sup>

This was too much for B. B. Janz, now living in Coaldale, Alberta, who had defended so powerfully the principle of nonresistance in Russia during the revolutionary period.<sup>58</sup> In his response he asked whether one could be a Mennonite and not be nonresistant, and whether or not Schroeder had falsified Menno's position. To make his point, Janz revisited the Russian events of 1918-1919 where the advocates of the *Selbstschutz* had also attempted to undermine the principle of nonresistance with arguments such as: since they were in a state of civil war and no official government was available to protect them, Mennonites who took up arms in defense of the colonies were simply seeking to maintain a basic order in times of chaos. Once a stable government would be in place, they would immediately lay down their arms. Or, since Mennonites had never, in any case at least not within recent memory, lived up to the high ideals of nonresistance, they should, in the name of honesty, cease to be hypocrites and take up arms. As a third factor in the erosion of nonresistance in Russia Janz mentioned the presence of German troops. Strange, he observed, how Russian troops had never elicited such a positive response from the Mennonite colonies.<sup>59</sup> In the very next issue of *Der Bote* (2 January, 1935) Janz followed up his attack on Schroeder with citations from Menno Simons on nonresistance as collected by John Horsch.<sup>60</sup>

This issue of nonresistance and its relationship to *das Deutschtum* is of critical importance in the Russian Mennonites' drift toward Nazism in Germany. By the time the Russian Mennonites began to arrive there in the early 1920s, German Mennonites had long since given up the ancient Anabaptist principle. Heinrich van der Smitten, for example, speaking for German Mennonites as a body stated in 1916: "We German Mennonites do not seek to hide the fact that the vast majority of us, though we respect the absolute nonresistance of our forefathers, neither can nor wish to retain it under the German conditions."<sup>61</sup> German Mennonites had sacrificed nonresistance on the assumption that it was not a central aspect of their faith, but merely a "Mennonite distinctive." Over the years they had come to regard these "distinctives" as *adiaphora*: things indifferent to the faith. Sacrificing them in order to be more acceptable to the mainstream of German society was therefore not a significant loss. After 1864 and the Prussian government's refusal to continue their exemption, the erosion was rapid. Having given up the principle, German Mennonites began to rationalize the new reality. At the turn of the century they made the argument explicit.<sup>62</sup> Their confession of faith, they argued, should contain those aspects "that unite us as Christians, that is, to the foundations of the Christian faith, and then [we come] to our Mennonite distinctives [*Mennonitische Besonderheiten*]."<sup>63</sup> By the time Hitler appeared on the scene, German Menno-

nites had even begun to criticize their Anabaptist ancestors for adhering to such Mennonite distinctives. These now appeared impediments in their desire to become an accepted part of the new political order.<sup>64</sup>

Somewhat different forces were at work among Russian Mennonites. The war and the subsequent presence of German troops in the Ukraine, some in their very midst for approximately six months in 1918, awakened them to the impact *das Deutschtum* and German culture generally had already had upon them. In an earlier chapter we noted Peter Braun's own awakening in this regard. In the 1917 list of materials to be collected which he drew up after his appointment as archivist, there is an entry that drew attention to this topic; an indication of the importance Braun assigned to the phenomenon. In Section XII of that list, entitled: "Materials regarding the most important events that are to be emphasized since the beginning of the 1914 war," Braun listed, in second place: "(b) the awakening of a German national consciousness at the outset of the revolution."<sup>65</sup> To what extent Braun was simply seeking to validate, in the Russian Mennonite community, what had transpired in his own life is difficult to say. What is obvious, however, is that Braun would not have sought to collect materials on the subject had he not thought it important.

This awakening of a national German consciousness coincided with another development within the Russian Mennonite community: not the gradual loss but the nearly overnight outright rejection by a significant number of leading Russian Mennonites (the number has never been tabulated) of that very principle of nonresistance, a principle in defense of which they had left Prussia in the late eighteenth century and fought the Russian Imperial government in the years 1873-74. Now, however, in 1917-1918, many of them willingly sacrificed it when there was no external governmental political pressure exerted upon them to do so.

The principle of nonresistance, also doggedly defended by them against the Imperial government's repeated attempts to force them into military service during the recent war against Germany, first came up for an internal discussion after the collapse of the Romanov dynasty at the Neuhalbstadt General Conference of 6-8 June, 1917. It was at this conference that B. H. Unruh delivered an address on nonresistance later (in 1926) published in the *Mennonitische Rundschau*.<sup>66</sup> It was one of Unruh's finest moments and the conference responded with a powerful affirmation of the principle, the minutes recording that

The conference stands firmly and is immovably planted on the principle of nonresistance, which, deeply embedded in the spirit of the Gospel, is an essential and inalienable principle of the Mennonite confession of faith. In agree-

ment with the teachings of the Bible and Menno, the Mennonites regard it to be their holy obligation faithfully to serve their fatherland, but without shedding blood.<sup>67</sup>

The minutes proceeded to record that the conference believed it imperative that it be represented at the forthcoming national constitutional assembly by one of its own who could impress that body with the importance Mennonites attached to nonresistance and the principle of absolute religious freedom. Unruh was subsequently elected by the Mennonites to be this man, but the assembly never met due to the October, 1917 Revolution. Only one year later, at the 30 June, 1918 Lichtenau General Conference, this unanimity with respect to nonresistance had been shattered.

By June, 1918 the Russian Mennonite colonies had experienced a very different kind of war. No longer were they dealing with a distant conflict fought by a people from whom they had long been isolated. Before the German troops arrived in the Molotschna on 19 April, 1918, Mennonite villages had been inundated by the first of many waves of terror that were to wash over their communities between 1917 and 1922. Peter Braun described this terror in graphic terms to his brother Abraham in Germany in a letter of 14 May. Having done so, he remarked:

Many of us now ask: Where do we go from here? We have experienced many things during the four war years; we suffered greatly at the hands of the imperial government, but even more under the Bolshevik regime. These years have brought about a great transformation in many of us Mennonites – even in me – and not only in regard to our religious principle of nonresistance.<sup>68</sup>

The extent of the transformation that had taken place with regard to nonresistance became apparent at the Lichtenau General Conference.

Shortly before the conference met, the Berdiansk District Commander of the German occupying forces requested permission of the German and Mennonite colonists to establish a colonial militia – a *Selbstschutz* – for the defense of the colonies. According to David H. Epp, the commander wanted an answer by 4 July, only a few days after the close of the conference. That naturally mandated a discussion of the matter by the conference.

To set the stage for a conference decision on the request, Jacob H. Janzen delivered a paper entitled: "Our Nonresistance." That address no longer carried the affirmation and conviction of his friend Unruh's presentation of the previous year; but by then Unruh, like another mutual friend, Peter J. Braun, had also lost his earlier conviction.<sup>69</sup> While Scripture could be cited for the Mennonite position, Janzen

argued, the Bible nevertheless nowhere prohibited military service by a direct command. To be sure, Janzen continued, it was "no sin if one already act[ed] in agreement [with the ethics] of the kingdom of God," but Christians had of necessity to live in a world of political institutions for which war was an inevitable reality. No matter the arguments, however, Janzen asserted, Mennonites as a whole had already given up the principle. Therefore, all that was left for them to do was to decide if the one group would tolerate the other inside the church and leave the decision regarding nonresistance to the individual.

The conference's response to Janzen's presentation was to suggest that the entire matter be addressed *de novo*. Perhaps to refresh the conference's collective memory as to what that once tenaciously held principle was someone requested that Unruh's paper from the previous year's conference be presented anew. But Unruh, perhaps suspecting what might happen, was absent; the conference therefore decided not to have it read by someone else. A lengthy discussion followed in which the pros and cons, given the new circumstances, were discussed. Whereas Janzen had still argued that nonresistance had been a principle adhered to by all of the old *Taufgesinnte*, Peter Braun denied this. Not all Anabaptists had been nonresistant, he argued; indeed, some like Balthasar Hubmaier had held differing positions on the matter. This was also true, he continued, of their own Flemish and Frisian ancestors, the latter being "less adamant and more tolerant" on the matter than the former. The Frisians, Braun asserted, "had allowed the bearing of weapons of self defense. But both groups opposed war. Menno himself adhered closely to the principle of nonresistance but nowhere in his writings did he address military service."<sup>70</sup>

As they had earlier in Germany, events were clearly shaping the principle; for whereas a Jacob Thiessen could wonder how such a dramatic transformation could have taken place among Mennonites within the year, a Johann Harder argued, like Peter Braun, that the events of the past year had gradually convinced him that, under certain circumstances, resistance was a duty. B. B. Janz, a defender of nonresistance, concluded that if the Mennonites' attitude on the matter was to be determined by their possessions, there was nothing more to be said. In the end it came down to a question of whether or not the conference would leave the decision on nonresistance to the individual conscience. Two resolutions were proposed: both were pro the principle, but the first recommended that congregations not impose it upon their dissenting members; the second stated that congregations did not have the right to impose their views on their members. Whereas resolution number one passed overwhelmingly, in effect neither resolution mandated a continued general adherence to the principle for all church

members. Thus was the door opened to the *Selbstschutz* and military resistance, even if only for individuals. Such a decision was probably a foregone conclusion given the terror in the Mennonite colonies of 1917-1918.

Christ's command to "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you," given in His Sermon on the Mount, had always been one of the pillars of Anabaptist/Mennonite nonresistance.<sup>71</sup> But love of enemies became increasingly difficult for Russian Mennonites in these years given the anarchist depredations of the Makhno terrorists, the merciless requisitions policy of undisciplined Bolshevik henchmen, and the cold-blooded treatment of the Mennonites by CHEKA agents. By 1922, Peter Braun in his "Why Emigrate?" could write that Mennonites had earlier already "nearly universally looked down upon the Russian with disdain." But there had been a genuine love of Russia. Now, however,

. . . in the place of love and goodwill . . . have arisen contempt and hatred, a very conscious hatred. There has always been a gulf separating us from the Russians, but this gulf has now become a chasm which, in my opinion, can no longer be bridged.<sup>72</sup>

Mennonites hated the Makhnovtsy, the Bolsheviks, their surrounding neighbors, but especially the "Jewish-Slavic" clique that formed the Bolshevik leadership. Braun observed:

All these considerations – and my list is by no means complete – point with absolute necessity to the fact that remaining in Russia under Slavic or Jewish-Slavic rule among an overwhelmingly racially alien people would mean the destruction of our *Volkstum*; therefore emigration is the only route to our salvation.<sup>73</sup>

Emigration did not lessen the hatred in the Russian Mennonite's breast, however. And those who came to Germany found confirmation in Hitler's brand of National Socialism, a system founded upon hatred: the hatred of the Jews and the Communists. It is little wonder then that so many Russian Mennonites who settled in Germany saw Hitler as their savior,<sup>74</sup> and his early successes on the Eastern front as providential. Had they not rejected their Anabaptist principle of nonresistance with its concomitant admonition to pray for those who persecuted them, they would not have gone down this road.<sup>75</sup>

It is not our purpose in this study to trace the Nazification of those Russian Mennonites who migrated to Germany after the war, though we have alluded to aspects of it from time to time. What must be our focus is the impact this development and its concomitant emphasis on

*das Deutschtum* had upon the continuing debate regarding the Dutch as opposed to the Germanic origins of the Prussian Mennonites. At the same time we wish to note the debate's relationship to the rewriting, primarily by Benjamin Unruh, of the Prussian Mennonite story.

Russian Mennonites like David H. Epp, Peter Braun and others, writing during the war, had stressed the fact (both in their more public as well as private utterances on the subject) that Mennonites had left Prussia primarily because of the latter's militarism. More specifically, the first group from Danzig had left because they had come under Prussian rule as the result of the Partitions of Poland, a rule that sought to force Mennonites to violate their consciences by accepting military service. German/Prussian militarism was alien to them, they argued in their 1915 petitions requesting exemption from the land liquidation laws. Had the partitions of Poland not occurred, they contended, Mennonites would not have left the region. Poland had been their benefactor; indeed, Mennonites had intermarried to an extent with the Poles, as both Braun and Friesen argued. Mennonites were therefore Dutch pacifists who feared the dreaded "Prussian yoke" as well as the expansionist, militaristic goals of the Prussian government.

1918, however, changed matters. The "hated" German army of the war years had come to the aid of the Mennonites in the Ukraine saving them, at least temporarily, from the devil Makhno, the Bolsheviks and the increasing animosity of their Ukrainian neighbors. They wanted the German troops to remain; when they had to leave, Mennonites sought to migrate to Germany. In 1929 the German government once more came to their rescue, this time delivering some 6,000 of them from the rapacious clutches of the Bolshevik terror. Times had obviously changed dramatically, and Mennonite politics along with them, as B. B. Wiens noted. It was under these changed conditions that B. H. Unruh began to rewrite the history of the Prussian/Russian Mennonites, and he did so by attempting to integrate them firmly into the German *Volk*.

Unruh had been in Germany since 1920, a defeated but not a vanquished country. Its northeastern map had been redrawn after the war, with Poland granted much of its old land back. Could Russian Mennonites now in Germany still speak favorably of Poland under these circumstances,<sup>76</sup> especially since their Prussian brothers were now fully integrated into the German state and *Volk*, yet lived under three separate jurisdictions: in the newly created Poland, the Free City of Danzig, and the eastern German province of East Prussia? Unruh, teaching at the Technical University in Karlsruhe, cannot but have been influenced by these post-war developments. He had also been at the center of Germany's successful rescue of some 6,000 Mennonites from Moscow in



1929. Even had he wanted to, and he clearly did not, Unruh could not have accepted the old Russian Mennonite pre-World War I interpretation of Prussian Mennonite history.<sup>77</sup>

Nevertheless, it was not until several years after the death of his old friend Peter Braun that Unruh took up the pledge he had made to himself at the 1917 Moscow congress to investigate and settle once and for all the issue of Prussian Mennonite origins. His first essays on the topic began to appear virtually simultaneously in the *Mennonitische Rundschau* and *Der Bote* in May of 1935 under the general caption of "Preliminary Questions for a Scientific (Scholarly) Clarification of the Origins of Russian-German Mennonitism." Nearly two years after Hitler's seizure of power and amidst the increasingly strident tone of German politics, Unruh nevertheless encouraged his readers to "trust the academicians" in this matter.<sup>78</sup> The problem of Prussian Mennonite origins, he said, had to be resolved linguistically. He began by citing the 1928 Munich University dissertation of Walter Quiring who was by 1935 another outspoken Nazi supporter, on the Chortitza "Mundart" (dialect); and G. E. Frerichs on Menno's language. These "authorities" had both spoken of a "niederdeutsch" (Low German) rather than a "niederländisch" (Low Dutch) dialect.<sup>79</sup> In the second installment of the series, Unruh turned to the related question of the racial origins of the Prussian Mennonites, stating at the very outset that two things were indispensable in this regard: first "that the Russian Mennonites, like the West Prussians, speak a *niederdeutsch* dialect, and, [second], that they in any case belong to the Germanic race."<sup>80</sup> The question of Prussian Mennonite origins, Unruh asserted, had to be clarified linguistically; it had "absolutely nothing to do with politics."<sup>81</sup>

The third installment of 12 June, 1935 made it clear that Unruh's racial/linguistic argument was being influenced by the new "racial" research being carried out at the University of Kiel. Having categorically rejected any kind of "political" solution to the problem, Unruh began to expand his linguistic context in the fourth installment, arguing that the linguistic region that stretched from Britain to East Prussia constituted one *Sprachraum*, one linguistic area. "This incorporated," he continued, "the *niederländisch* as well as the *niederdeutsch* dialects." Linguistic boundaries were therefore blurred and fluid. No wonder he opposed a political solution to the problem.<sup>82</sup>

Unruh returned to the series in 1936. He opened his sixth installment by quoting from an essay in the *Deutsche Post* by a Dr. Joseph Geiger. There Geiger had written:

The Russian public saw in the Mennonites more than merely a confessional separatist group but cared little about their racial or national origin. The Men-

nonites themselves, who in many respects have performed exemplary *volks-deutsche* civilizing work, have variously flirted with the doctrine of the Dutch origin of the Mennonites; as a result many of them convinced themselves of their Dutch origin out of ignorance.<sup>83</sup>

Aside from the political boundaries that separated Holland from Germany, Geiger continued, both languages were simply variants of the original German. But neither Geiger nor Unruh would have conceded that if this were so, one could with greater justification call Russian Mennonites Dutch rather than German since they had come originally from within Dutch territory.<sup>84</sup> To a certain extent, both Geiger and Unruh were playing linguistic imperialism, attempting to subsume the smaller groups long politically separated from the German Reich, if ever a part of it, in the very way that Hitler was about to play the *Gross-deutschland* (greater Germany) theme before he annexed Austria, Poland, the Sudeten Germans, and eventually even Holland and Belgium to the Third Reich. Ideally, political boundaries should follow racial lines, for race was the primary factor. Political boundaries were mere artificial constructs, perhaps even mere accidents of history as H. H. Schroeder had already argued in direct dependence upon Hitler.<sup>85</sup>

Unruh continued in this vein for several more installments, but he could not forever avoid an *Auseinandersetzung* with his good friend Peter Braun's *Kto takie Mennonity* which had initiated the controversy in the first place.<sup>86</sup> Finally, in installment eight of his "Vorfragen" series Unruh indicated that such a discussion was in the offing.<sup>87</sup> But it did not come until the tenth installment of the series. He had first, in the ninth installment, to reject the argument that German scholars were racists and then proceed to assert that those "Dutch" settlers, who had come to Poland and Prussia in the sixteenth century, had, already in the second generation, been integrated into the Germanic population, implying that even if they had originally been Dutch the linguistic and cultural divide between them and their Germanic neighbors had not been great.<sup>88</sup>

Unruh wasted no time in his tenth installment getting to Braun's document. He indicated at the outset that he possessed the German translation and expanded version of the 1915 edition which clearly listed Braun as author. He then turned to Braun's theory of the Waldensian origin of the Dutch Mennonites, arguing that recent scholarship had rejected it. But he did not say that, at the time Braun wrote the piece, he had himself been an ardent defender of the theory. From the Keller thesis Unruh moved on to the Mennonite migration to Poland. Here he took issue with Braun's statement that, as a consequence of Poland's invitation to the Dutch Mennonites to settle in that country,

they had become Polish citizens.<sup>89</sup> This was incorrect, Unruh stated: Mennonites had lived in Polish Prussia under an alien legal system as "non-citizens": *Unbürger*. Braun's incorrect historical understanding, Unruh argued, had severely burdened the discussion of Prussian Mennonite origins.<sup>90</sup> In any case, even though the regions inhabited by Mennonites had stood under Polish jurisdiction, Mennonites had been overwhelmingly Germanic.<sup>91</sup> Mennonites, he argued somewhat later, had first been given Prussian citizenship under Frederick the Great. And Danzig Mennonites had welcomed the Prussian takeover of Polish territory already after the first partition, Unruh asserted. But his assertion rested on only one sermon by the Mennonite preacher Peter Epp of 18 October, 1772, a sermon for which the latter had been censured by his brethren. Unruh was well aware of the Mennonite antipathy to Prussian rule during the years before the migration, but he sought to minimize it at every turn, indeed to accentuate the positive wherever he thought he could get away with it. In any case, he argued in conclusion, whatever animosity there had been could not serve as a point of departure for solving the *Herkunftsfrage*. Once more he asserted: "Politics has always been a matter of interest. But it has absolutely nothing to do with the subject of [Mennonite] origins;" except, of course, his own politics.<sup>92</sup> But of that he remained silent.

The Second World War interrupted the public discussion of this topic for a time, but not Unruh's preoccupation with it. For it was in the early war years that he appears to have written most of his manuscript dealing with the emigration of 1923-1926, the very years during which Hitler's *Blitzkrieg* appeared unstoppable and the German armies rolled over Czechoslovakia, Poland and the Ukraine. Especially in the later chapters that had not yet been fully written at the conclusion of the war when the manuscript was ostensibly lost, that manuscript contains many documents relating to the emigration in which Unruh himself touched on the possibility of the Russian Mennonites returning to their Ukrainian homeland. In a letter of 18 December, 1921, for example, he wrote to the Dutch *Doopsgezinde Commissie voor Buitenlandse Nooden*: "The economic anarchy in Russia **will not last forever. There will come – of this I have no doubt whatsoever – a new day**" [my emphasis].<sup>93</sup> And to H. H. Schroeder in Constantinople he wrote only about a month later: "Should the possibility somehow come into existence [for the Mennonites] to return to Russia, I would recommend that they do so. I still believe that, in the future, the East will provide many advantages, at least in the long run. To be sure, the political delirium must first be overcome . . . ."<sup>94</sup> Twenty-two years later, writing his narrative account of the emigration movement, he observed:

[The emigration] has even found its counterpart during the course of the Second World War in a return settlement (*Rücksiedlung*) of the *volksdeutsche* Mennonites from the Black Sea region. To understand this phenomenon and its ramifications for the future, it is all the more essential to probe deeply into the causes, tempo and extent of the emigration since 1923.<sup>95</sup>

The manuscript contains numerous other references to his conviction, confirmed elsewhere in the corpus of Unruh's work, that the Leninist/Stalinist regime in Russia would not last long. Now, in 1943, he appears to have felt certain that Hitler was God's instrument not only to bring an end to that regime but also to establish German control over the regions where Mennonites had once, and to an extent, still lived. It is this perspective that explains his letter of 21 September, 1943 to Nazi authorities on behalf of Alexander Fast's widow. There he wrote: "The conviction that the *Führer* would smash Bolshevism drove the Fast couple, shortly after the outbreak of the war, to return to their motherland."<sup>96</sup> And he concluded: "Their example will serve to ignite a later return, namely of the Russian-Germans from Canada and the USA, to these Eastern regions."<sup>97</sup> At the 1917 Moscow Congress Unruh had sought to soften the impact of H. J. Braun's "Dutch" outburst by emphasizing the cultural *Deutschtum* of the Russian Mennonites; for German and Mennonite colonists, he believed, had to work together in Russia. As late as 24 February, 1944 he still believed that Mennonites, not only in Germany, still needed Germany's, indeed Hitler's, help. For he wrote to H. J. Braun: "The Brauns are East Frisians. East Friesland never belonged to 'Holland.' We must rid ourselves of that primitive Mennonite terminology! *It has done us much harm*" [my emphasis].<sup>98</sup> Braun's emphasis had harmed the Mennonites at the 1917 Moscow Congress, during the 1923-26 emigration movement, and could easily have done so again in 1929; or so at least Unruh asserted repeatedly. And it could do so again in 1943. At play in this assertion were Unruh's "political realism," his *Deutschtum*, his providential view of history and his desire for Mennonites to return to the Ukraine. Hence, his belief in Hitler's "divine calling."<sup>99</sup> All of this had little to do with a dispassionate investigation of Prussian Mennonite origins.

Given the above, it is no wonder that Unruh should title his 1943 manuscript *Die Auswanderung der niederdeutschen mennonitischen Bauern aus der Sowjetunion, 1923-1933*<sup>100</sup> (The Emigration of the Low German Mennonite Farmers from the Soviet Union, 1923-1933). The *niederländisch* (Dutch) aspect could be omitted at this stage of Europe's political developments. Yet inside the manuscript he did, on at least a few occasions, use the earlier combined term; he even included some of his letters written during the years 1921-1924 in which he, as in his 16

December, 1921 letter to the *Doopsgezinde Commissie*, emphasized the Russian Mennonites' Dutch roots. There he said: "Since the Russian Mennonite congregations have their origin, to a large extent, in the Netherlands . . . ." <sup>101</sup> At the time, Unruh was interested in enlisting the support of the Dutch government in the Russian Mennonite emigration movement. In 1943, however, he was writing under the aegis of a Nazi influence and for publication in a Nazi-sponsored scholarly series; the Nazi influence extended even to the point of attempting to establish the "purity of the blood of these *volksdeutsche* settlers." He took for granted that such purity had been maintained by means of the closed Mennonite settlements in Russia. <sup>102</sup>

The manuscript contains other interesting passages that touch on our theme. Throughout, Unruh argues for the "German loyalty" of the Russian Mennonites. <sup>103</sup> And the one time Unruh touches on the "Dutch argument" he places the onus for it on none other than Karl Lindemann; <sup>104</sup> Heinrich J. Braun, Johann Thiesen and even Peter J. Braun are not so much as mentioned in this connection. Perhaps Unruh considered it impolitic to suggest, in his 1943 Nazi German context, that Russian Mennonites had at all, never mind in great numbers, claimed to be of Dutch origin during World War I. Instead, he emphasized the extent to which local Mennonite villagers had opposed this "Lindemann initiative," stating:

The Mennonite villagers produced communal statements in which, despite the Netherlands origin of their fathers and especially because of their East Frisian origin, they vociferously proclaimed their *Deutschtum*. Their forebears had come out of the region of the Netherlands (*Niederländischen Raum*), out of East Friesland, the region around Groningen, the province of Frisia, out of the originally Frisian North-Holland, out of Flanders. They saw themselves as Low German farmers and intended, against all odds, to remain such, even if it entailed the loss of their lands . . . . <sup>105</sup>

Was this the argument of the Mennonite farmers, or was it Unruh's argument? Did these farmers even know anything about these various sixteenth-century Dutch and North German provinces? Not likely. Perhaps Unruh was here taking a page out of the historical works of Classical Greek and Roman historians who, on occasion, placed fictitious speeches into the mouths of their heroes at critical junctures in their narrative accounts.

One other passage in the manuscript bears upon our topic. In it, Unruh once more refers to the origin of the *Herkunftsfrage* in Russia during World War I. This time, however, he does not speak of his intention to resolve the issue; he speaks of it as already having been resolved "in depth" in his just completed *Die Urheimat der niederdeutschen*

*Bauern*<sup>106</sup> (The Original Homeland of the Low German Farmers). The result of that investigation, he asserted, was “that the Russian Mennonites, viewed from a racial perspective, constitute a mixture [*Mischart*].” He explained that it was the destiny of a persecuted Protestant minority group to be constantly on the move. Therefore,

Just as Moravia in the South, East Friesland in the North became a haven (or gathering place) for refugees from various German (North and Central Germany) and Netherlands regions. In the 40s of the sixteenth century and later, these refugees – perhaps not all of them but a great many – migrated to the Nogat and Vistula lowlands. Here, coming as they did out of the Low German regions, they quickly accommodated themselves to the language and customs of the West and East Prussians. B. H. Unruh already suggested the various aspects of this process in a memorandum to his colleague A. A. Friesen, developed it in a speech at a meeting of the DAI<sup>107</sup> based on a series of articles in the Canadian *Bote*, and finally confirmed it in a scholarly monograph on the original homeland of the *niederdeutsche* Mennonite farmers of the Eastern regions so that, today, the *Herkunftsfrage* may be regarded as having essentially been resolved

108  
.....

Whether he intended to do so or not, this passage clearly implies that there was no development whatsoever in Unruh’s essential understanding of the problem. All the years of scholarly study had not, in the least, modified his views. Indeed, Nazi ideology had only confirmed them. One is reminded of a classic statement made by Friedrich Engels, another determinist historian. On one occasion, long after having written on a particular matter, Engels conceded to Marx’s daughter – after having finally read all the literature on the topic – how lucky he was to have guessed so accurately the contents of all those different writings! Unruh’s approach was more “scholarly,” for while he knew what the answer to the *Herkunftsfrage* was long before he began to investigate it, he only wrote after he had read thoroughly everything on the subject. Yet, all that work had served only to confirm his earliest opinions!

## Those Who Ignore History

*The accurate knowledge of what has happened will be useful, because, according to human probability, similar things will happen again.*

– Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*.

Well before Unruh's manuscript began to make its way across the Atlantic to its current resting place in Stanford University's Hoover Archive, Russian Mennonites were once more on the move westwards. This time they fled their Ukrainian homeland in late 1943 before the retreating German armies who had occupied the region since 1941. The Germans took them to be *Volksdeutsche*; they themselves, as it appears, did not deny it.<sup>1</sup> Most, if not all, were granted German citizenship,<sup>2</sup> the more easily to draft their young men into the German armies whose manpower was rapidly being depleted; some became Nazi collaborators and others even joined the SS. But then, despite all pompous Nazi rhetoric to the contrary, the Reich collapsed, and the Führer, in whom Benjamin Unruh had placed such extravagant hopes, committed suicide. Suddenly the refugees found themselves caught between a Russian army that sought to repatriate them in accordance with the agreement reached at Yalta and Tehran between Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin in February of 1945, and the occupying forces of the Western Allies who were committed to sending them back if they were not German citizens. Western relief organizations, arriving in Europe in the wake of their conquering armies, sought to resolve the massive refugee problem in post-war Europe. But even after January, 1946 when the Allies refused any longer to aid the Russians in their forced repatriations because of atrocities that had occurred, these organizations refused to help finance the resettlement of anyone who was, or had been, a Russian citizen, had been tainted by Nazism or had voluntarily become a German citizen. The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), which had initially sent personnel over to do relief work, quickly became involved in helping these Ukrainian Mennonite refugees. But on its own, it could not finance their resettlement outside the Soviet Union; MCC needed the financial assistance of the larger relief agencies. It therefore once more became advantageous for Russian Mennonites to be of Dutch origin. But could MCC prove this to the International Relief Organization (IRO) to win support for their resettlement efforts?

And what about Benjamin Unruh, who had stood in the eye of the storm in 1920-1926 and again in 1929-1930, performing yeoman's service to his suffering brothers and sisters? Other men, the likes of MCC representative C. F. Klassen and Peter J. Dyck, now stood in the breach and Unruh was forced to watch from the sidelines, having been told by a young MCC worker that his wartime collaboration with the Nazis had compromised his effectiveness. His predictions of the imminent collapse of Communism in Russia had proven false; so also had his contention that Hitler was God's chosen instrument to smash the Bolshevik regime and re-establish those ideal Mennonite communities he had so nostalgically written of in the 1920s. Instead, disaster had once more engulfed his old homeland and those Mennonites who had either chosen or been forced to remain behind some two decades earlier. Nor were US and Canadian Mennonites streaming back to their old homeland in the Ukraine; indeed, some 35,000 more of the former had taken advantage of the German presence in the Ukraine to make good their escape to the West. Of these, some 22,000 were forcibly "repatriated" to the Soviet Union and "resettled" in Siberia and other remote regions, many of them never to be heard from again. Instead of becoming the savior of Mennonites in the East, Hitler and his armies had brought about their ultimate ruin. Had Unruh's *Die Auswanderung*, with its Nazi racial theories and emphasis on the *Niederdeutsche* origins of the Russian Mennonites, been published by the war's end, it could well have made the ultimate rescue of even those 10,500 Mennonites who had succeeded in escaping Stalin's clutches much more difficult.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps Providence worked in ways very different from those Unruh had sought to impose upon it. As the sequel will demonstrate, it may well have been fortunate<sup>4</sup> that Unruh's manuscript was not discovered until well after these events had run their course.

One morning in early August, 1945, Dutch newspapers carried the story of a group of refugees that had crossed the border into Holland, claiming that their forebears had left the Netherlands because of persecution in the sixteenth century. At that time, they had fled to Prussia and later moved on to Russia. Now, after some 400 years, they had returned home and wished to be repatriated. Skeptical Dutch authorities called in a linguistics professor to assist in establishing their racial identity. He concluded that though they were neither Dutch nor German, their language did have strong affinities to both. But the refugees carried no passports, visas or entry permits with them. And despite telling an incredible story of suffering and persecution in, and flight from, the Red Paradise, it appeared unlikely that Holland would allow them into the country. After all, their relatives had already been refused entry under better Dutch circumstances in the 1920s when, through B. B. Janz, they had appealed to the queen to be repatriated.



T. O. Hylkema, now in Amsterdam, read the story over his morning coffee and immediately telephoned Elfrieda Dyck, wife of Peter J. Dyck and sister to C. F. Klassen, who, with her husband, had been sent by MCC to do relief work in the Netherlands. Having written the story of the plight of their fellow believers in the early 1920s, Hylkema wondered whether these refugees could also be Russian Mennonites. The very next day the three of them went to investigate. They were indeed Russian Mennonites, and their stay in the country was, to be sure, very tenuous. And so Hylkema, Peter Dyck and a Dr. Craandijk traveled to The Hague the following morning to meet with Dutch immigration officials. After a lengthy discussion, which established that MCC and the Dutch Doopsgezinde would take over the care of the refugees and see to it that, as soon as possible, they would be resettled outside the country, the Dutch officials allowed the thirty-three refugees to remain.<sup>5</sup>

News of the group's success filtered through to other refugees seeking to escape the long reach of Soviet repatriation. Before much time had elapsed they too were at the Dutch border and allowed in under similar conditions. Eventually, after some 420 had been admitted, Soviet authorities discovered from press releases what was happening and brought pressure to bear upon the Dutch government to return them. Through its embassy in The Hague it demanded that the Dutch immediately close their borders to these people and turn over the 420 already inside the country. Bowing to Soviet pressure, the Dutch government did, temporarily, close its borders; but it refused to turn the refugees over to Soviet authorities. Instead it allowed Soviet personnel to interview the refugees, but the decision to return or not to return was left to the Mennonites themselves in accordance with the Yalta agreement. Interviews took place, but understandably, not a single refugee chose to accept the kind Soviet invitation to return to the workers' paradise. Indeed, after two days the Soviet authorities recognized the futility of their enterprise and withdrew from the project. Hoping to forestall other Mennonite refugees from seeking sanctuary in the Netherlands, however, the Soviets threatened to retain all Dutch refugees in their sector if the Dutch continued to let Soviet citizens in. But when their citizens were all safely at home, the Dutch government once again began to cooperate with MCC.

In the meantime, on 1 February, 1947, C. F. Klassen managed to get a first transport of Mennonite refugees out of Berlin and North Germany on board the Dutch steamer Volendam to Paraguay for resettlement. Nearly immediately he set off for London to meet with the Intergovernmental Council on Relief (IGCR) officials to request financial assistance for the voyage. The assistance hinged on whether the refugees were of Dutch or German descent. To resolve the matter, two officials of the council were sent to the Netherlands to investigate

MCC's claim that they were of Dutch ancestry. Once more Hylkema was drawn in, but no conclusive evidence could be produced. After several weeks of searching and when it appeared the quest would be futile, a staff member (it appears of Hylkema's church) discovered – so the New York Times reported – a copy of Horst Penner's 1940 doctoral dissertation entitled: *Ansiedlung mennonitischer Niederländer im Weichselmuendungsgebiet von der Mitte des 16. Jahrhunderts bis zum Beginn der preussischen Zeit* (Dutch Mennonite Settlements in the Vistula Delta from the Mid-Sixteenth Century to the Beginning of Prussian Rule).<sup>6</sup> Not only did Penner repeatedly state that the Prussian Mennonites had come from the Netherlands, he consistently called them *Holländer*, that dreaded term Unruh had told Heinrich Braun in 1944 never to use again.<sup>7</sup> But, according to C. F. Klassen, what convinced the IGCR authorities was the list of Dutch family names of these Prussian Mennonites appended to the study. Virtually ninety percent of the Ukrainian Mennonite refugee names appeared on the list, convincing enough proof for the authorities. At a later meeting Klassen told Penner: "What a find that was! Just what we needed, laid out in scholarly detail. With that the Commission returned to England: mission accomplished."<sup>8</sup> What everyone appears to have missed, however, is the concluding paragraph of Penner's study that hung there like an alien "Unruh" afterthought. There Penner (if it was indeed he) wrote:

We must, however, most decisively reject the attempt, made from a partisan Polish perspective, to label these emigrants as Dutch foreigners. If we have heretofore spoken of Netherlandsers, then always only as of a *niederdeutschen Volksteil* (Low German splinter group) which, over the centuries since 1550 has gradually, as the essential Netherlands, more and more divorced itself from the German national body. At the time the Frisians and other Netherlandsers migrated into the Vistula Delta there was as yet hardly any such separation. Had the emigrants to Russia and Poland still viewed Holland and not West Prussia as their homeland they would probably not have taken the West Prussian dialect with them to Russia as their mother tongue.<sup>9</sup>

Obviously, the West Prussian Penner had not been aware of the Dutch/German controversy in Russia; therefore he had not intruded the "necessary corrections" into the text as he wrote. Perhaps his doctoral advisor would not have allowed it. Whatever the case, was Penner's integrity as an historian compromised by his own (or someone else's) attempt to change the impact of his evidence by placing it into a racial and linguistic *Grossdeutschland* context? One wonders how he felt when C. F. Klassen told him how his study had come to the aid of the "Dutch" Ukrainian Mennonite refugees. And that it had saved MCC some 160,000 dollars.

But the question of the eligibility of the Ukrainian Mennonite refugees for IRO aid was to arise again and again. The implications were far-reaching, as Ted Regehr has shown.<sup>10</sup> Russian officials themselves, in the wake of the Volendam sailing, were the occasion for doing so in an official note of protest to the American State Department. The note induced the State Department to commission Morton Royse, an American historian, to investigate the ethnic origin and political orientation of the Mennonite refugees. As Regehr reports, Royse concluded that they were *Volksdeutsche* no matter what their ancestry. He reasoned that

A doubtful origin, dating back several centuries, cannot change the character of the present generation, which was German and so recognized by themselves and others. These people, of the present generation, are *Volksdeutsche* or members of the German minority, in all ethnic aspects and mentality, regardless of what historical claims they may have to an obscure remote ancestry.<sup>11</sup>

The Royse report was relayed to William T. Snyder of MCC by George L. Warren, the State Department's Advisor on Refugees and Displaced Persons with whom MCC officials were on good terms. He asked MCC to prepare a response; the obligation to do so was laid at the door of Bethel College's Cornelius Krahn. On 6 April, 1948 Krahn submitted his 30 page "Memorandum on the Mennonite Refugees from South Russia."<sup>12</sup> Consisting of an introduction and some ten separate arguments with supporting historical evidence/interpretations, Krahn proceeded to present a multi-dimensional argument in contrast to Unruh's much more narrowly based racial/linguistic argument. First, he set out to prove that Ukrainian Mennonites were not ethnic Germans or *Volksdeutsche*, that their "Dutch origin [was] neither remote nor obscure," and that they were never "ethnically absorbed by any area in which they lived." To prove their Dutch ethnicity, "racial origin" was only one component of the answer, he argued; other determining factors were "family names," "religious practices and beliefs," "peculiar economic institutions" and "language and folk ways." Furthermore, Krahn contended, if these Mennonites were to be considered *Volksdeutsche*, they should share the cultural aspirations and political ambitions of the German state. Already the screening by military and international refugee organizations had demonstrated this not to be the case. Indeed, from the time they had left the Netherlands in the sixteenth century, Krahn argued, their religious concerns had overridden every other consideration. Nor did "a single American Mennonite historian" hold these Mennonites to be "ethnically German, nor had they been attached to the nationalistic interests of Germany."<sup>13</sup> Krahn then listed the ten major reasons "why it would be both unfair and inaccurate to classify

the Mennonite refugees 'Volksdeutsche' or to consider their cultural loyalty to Germany." He developed these arguments individually in the main body of the memorandum.

The first point Krahn wished to make was that both the Russian government and knowledgeable Russian writers had, virtually from the beginning, distinguished between the German colonists and Mennonite settlers in the Ukraine.<sup>14</sup> To establish this fact, he cited David Rempel's July, 1935 *MQR* article; more specifically, footnote # 62 where Rempel referred to the distinction Alexander Klaus, a high Russian government official, had himself made on the basis of his access to official government documents.

Secondly, Krahn contended that the Russian Mennonites, rather than being loyal supporters of Germany and its policies, had always been loyal Russian subjects until the latter government made it impossible for them to continue being so. To demonstrate this loyalty to their Russian fatherland, Krahn quoted from the letter of an all-Mennonite delegation to Grand Duke Constantine Nikolaievitch, Chairman of the Imperial Council in 1873, that had been quoted in a 1943 *MQR* essay by Jacob Suderman of Goshen College, an essay Suderman had concluded with a reference to the Russian government's persecution of these loyal Mennonite subjects during World War I.

Thirdly, Krahn stated that the Ukrainian Mennonites were a "non-political group who found National Socialism under the German occupation of the Ukraine as abhorrent as the rule of Communistic Russia." Surely this was an exaggeration. Nevertheless, he quoted at length from an essay in *Mennonite Life* by a Rev. Gerhard Fast, himself a refugee from the Ukraine. Among other things Fast had written:

The German colonies of Russia, including those of the Mennonites, were especially entrusted to Himmler's 'SS'. Generally they did not reveal their objectives, but our people soon noticed whence the wind was blowing. In the long run the Mennonites were to give up their Christian faith and substitute for it the new faith of 'Blut und Boden'. In March, 1942 when I came to Chortitza I told our people, 'If Germany wins we cannot stay, because she will not tolerate our religious views. She thinks highly of our industriousness and culture, but will do everything to change our religious convictions. If Germany loses the war, there will be no room for us in that collapsed country. Thus, there is only one hope - to find a new home in America.'<sup>15</sup>

Fourthly, Krahn argued that the Mennonites of South Russia "did not regard themselves as of German origin and as recently as 1922 represented themselves to the Russian government as being of Dutch rather than German origin." Surely Krahn knew of the Mennonite response to the German troops in 1918, their subsequent flirtation with

emigration to Germany, indeed of the whole Dutch/German debate after World War I, although he never once mentioned Peter Braun's *Kto takie Mennonity*. And the term *Bürger Holländischer Herkunft* represented B. B. Janz's position; it was not everyone's opinion, certainly not that of B. H. Unruh. Krahn then proceeded to quote passages from the histories of John Horsch (*Mennonites in Europe*) and C. Henry Smith (*The Coming of the Russian Mennonites* and *The Story of the Mennonites*). But the historian whose work he regarded most highly and which he cited most prominently was that of David G. Rempel. He called his Stanford University doctoral dissertation on the Russian Mennonites "the most thorough and best documented account in the English language."<sup>16</sup> Prominent among his quotations on the Dutch/German issue during World War I, however, was the following paragraph from Smith's *Story of the Mennonites*:

Hoping to escape the consequences of this anti-German agitation by disclaiming any German ancestry, the German-speaking colonists, both Lutherans and Mennonites, insisted they were not real Germans. The Lutherans claimed a Swiss origin, while the Mennonites maintained that their ancestors had come originally from Holland, and only indirectly through Germany. The Russian authorities insisted, however, that since they were thoroughly saturated with German culture during their stay in Prussia, and spoke only the German language, and read German books, they must be regarded as Germans. *Holländerei* a certain Mennonite writer among them calls this attempt of the Russian Mennonites to deny their German heritage.<sup>17</sup>

Not a strong defense of the Dutch origin of the Ukrainian Mennonites, this. Indeed, one might even regard it as a confirmation for Morton Royse's position.

To strengthen this "Dutch argument" in Part V, Krahn attempted to demonstrate that the Russian Mennonites' Dutch ancestry was neither remote nor obscure, as Royse had asserted. Quoting C. Henry Smith once more, Krahn pointed to an incident in 1750 where a Polish king had "suggested they [the Mennonites] turn to their prosperous Dutch brethren for help," to how the Dutch Mennonites had assisted the Ukrainian Mennonites after World War I, and how Russian Mennonites had sent their missionaries to serve under Dutch Mennonite mission agencies since the nineteenth century. He then quoted from two Dutch Mennonite writers: S. H. W. Gorter from 1930 and T. O. Hylkema from 1946. The first had observed: "... so the Dutch want to faithfully support their co-religionists stemming from old Holland . . .," and the second had remarked:

... By their marriages only among one another they remained purely what they were; their language among themselves is still plat (oud) Hollandsch with

a somewhat German accent because of their sojourn in Danzig and Poland; their names also bespeak their origin. The names Jansen, Peters, Harms, Wall, Dijk, Ens, Siemans, Wiebe, Koop, Pauls, Thiessen, Doerksen, Friesen or Froese, Martens, and Hildebrand being the most frequent . . . Many of them have not forgotten their origin in the Netherlands. The Russians also put on their papers: 'of Netherlands origin' . . .<sup>18</sup>

Having made the case for the Dutch origin of the Russian Mennonites in Parts IV and V, Krahn, in Part VI, argued that these people had never been absorbed nor become an "ethnical part of Prussia after leaving Holland." Danzig had excluded them from its guilds, the kings of Poland – in one charter of privileges after another – had continued to deal with them as a separate group, as even Prussia did after Poland's partitions. And all the while they had maintained the Dutch language and close ties to Dutch culture for at least several centuries after their departure, living in compact and isolated groups where they were treated very much like Jews, being hated and persecuted by the surrounding people and clergy "far into the eighteenth century." As late as 1732 some had even returned to the Netherlands.<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, Krahn argued, when the "pressure of their environment began to break down the separation between the Mennonites and the people about them, they decided to migrate [to Russia] in order to preserve their distinct way of life."<sup>20</sup> In Part VII Krahn then made the case that "American, Polish, and Dutch writers" all stressed their Dutch ancestry. But he went beyond these, also quoting from Dr. Wilhelm Manhardt (*Die Wehrfreiheit*), P. M. Friesen and Dr. Jacob Quiring (*Die Mundart von Chortitza in Süd-Russland*). The only exceptions to this virtually unanimous verdict were, he contended, "a few recent German writers" who had attempted to "minimize this fact by stating, for example, that these Mennonites came from Holland while Holland was still a part of the German Reich."<sup>21</sup> Though he did not mention him by name, Krahn clearly had Benjamin Unruh in mind as the leader of these "few recent German writers."

Next, in Part VIII, Krahn turned to the names of the Ukrainian Mennonites. Citing the major studies of C. Henry Smith, he asserted that the names of 51.5% of some 8,578 refugees listed in a 1947 MCC compilation came from some twenty-two Dutch family names. A 1912 study of Mennonite names in East and West Prussia had also indicated that half of those Mennonites carried the same names. Even the vast majority of the other 49% of Mennonite names were of Dutch origin.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, in Part IX, Krahn tackled the problem of the devotional literature of these Mennonites. Here he cited the work of Robert Friedmann and his own unpublished manuscript on the subject. Both had argued that the Prussian Mennonites' cultural and religious language

had been Dutch until the end of the eighteenth century. Even in Russia, Mennonites had possessed Dutch Bibles and the *Martyrs Mirror* in the Dutch language.<sup>23</sup>

According to Ted Regehr, the IRO never officially accepted the arguments made by Krahn. Nevertheless, Mennonite refugees were henceforth granted the same assistance by the relief agencies as other groups, in effect vindicating MCC's position. The quarrel over the actions of the Ukrainian Mennonites had not ended, however. IRO officials were soon presented documentary evidence that indicated that at least some of the Russian Mennonites had actively sought German citizenship as early as 1942, others had volunteered for service in the German armed forces. Indeed, virtually all had, at one time or another, been sworn in as German citizens. More evidence to confirm the above was discovered in the Berlin Document Center in 1948-1949. IRO felt betrayed by MCC officials and, on 23 July, 1949, issued an order rejecting as ineligible for IRO assistance all Mennonite refugees "who had accepted or acknowledged German citizenship with the German *Einwohnermeldedienst*."<sup>24</sup> Only if evidence from the Berlin Document Center should prove otherwise, could assistance continue. Snyder and Klassen were forced to respond once more; now, however, they argued that the Ukrainian Mennonites had become German citizens out of necessity. They had resorted to an untruth "exclusively and only in order that they might protect themselves from Bolshevik agents who are active everywhere."<sup>25</sup> The same was true, they argued, of those who had joined the German armed forces, even the SS. Regehr concludes:

Any examination of the relevant German records, particularly those of the *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle* and the *Reichsministerium für die Ostgebiete*, makes it absolutely clear that the Germans regarded and treated the Mennonites in the occupied portions of the Soviet Union as ethnic Germans or *Volksdeutsche*. It is also clear from the writings of many of the refugees that they too thought of themselves as *Volksdeutsche* during the war, and particularly during their evacuation from the Soviet Union under German military protection . . .<sup>26</sup>

What the above story makes only too apparent is that the arguments with respect to their ethnic origin made by Mennonite refugees from the Ukraine after World War I were virtually replicated by their fellow refugees after World War II. Neither the refugees of 1943-1949 themselves, nor MCC officials, had learned much, if anything, from their experiences of some two decades earlier. Perhaps it is true that those who ignore the past are indeed condemned to repeat its mistakes.

Benjamin Unruh probably never heard of, never mind read, Krahn's "Memorandum"; just as Krahn had not, at least to this point, read Unruh's *Die Auswanderung*. Nevertheless, Unruh must have known of

the opposition of his American brethren to his interpretation of the origin of the Prussian/Russian Mennonites, for Ted Regehr reports that Penner's study, "together with extensive historical documentation compiled by Benjamin H. Unruh, who did not himself agree with the 'Dutch ancestry' arguments but allowed his work to be cited in support of those claims, proved persuasive."<sup>27</sup> A fascinating statement, this, for Unruh was shortly to publish a study based on this very evidence in his *Die Ostwanderung*, but with a very different conclusion. Perhaps the repetition of the 1918-1926 events in 1942-1948 merely stiffened his resolve to complete the enterprise he had committed himself to already at the 1917 Moscow Congress and settle the *Herkunftsfrage* once and for all as he had promised his readers often enough before the war. Perhaps he was just one of those scholars who, having once committed himself to a point of view, could not be persuaded to change his mind no matter the evidence. After all, he seems to have chosen to destroy incriminating evidence that linked him to the Nazis rather than admit his errors of judgment, if that is what they were. Unlike other prominent German Mennonite leaders – like Emil Händiges, for example – he does not appear ever to have conceded anything in this regard.

Like his other manuscripts which he claimed were virtually *druckreif* by the end of the war, Unruh's manuscript on *Die Ostwanderungen* must also have been virtually completed by then. But, as it seems, this one did not get lost with his other materials. Whatever the case, there was no money in post-war Germany to publish a manuscript that, even today, few scholars have read from cover to cover with any care. Finally, however, either in late 1953 or early 1954 a certain "Mr. D. G. Doerksen [of] Oak Bluff, Man[itoba], Canada,"<sup>28</sup> in good Mennonite fashion and upon a promise of repayment, provided the money to cover publication costs. One would very much like to know if and to what extent this manuscript underwent a revision after the war. What is apparent is that whereas he emphasized the *niederdeutsch* aspect of Prussian Mennonite origins in his *Die Auswanderung*, here, in his *Die Ostwanderungen*, Unruh replaced it with his more familiar *niederländisch-niederdeutsch* emphasis of the pre-Nazi years.

At the very outset of the study Unruh reiterated his oft-repeated assertion that the *Herkunftsfrage*, because of the politically-charged atmosphere during the war in Russia, had become politicized. He resurrected his contention, made to B. B. Janz in 1922, that a famous German scholar had accused the Russian Mennonites of falsifying history by claiming to be of Dutch origin. Yet no historian had made the effort to investigate the problem. Nevertheless, Unruh conceded that it was generally known that the "majority [of Russian Mennonites] had come out of the *niederländisch-niederdeutschen Raum*." To confirm this he



quoted from Reiswitz and Wadzeck, but granted that the latter had spoken only of their *niederländischen Ursprung*. Indeed, he himself captioned the second section of his opening chapter: "The Netherlands Origin of the Vast Majority of the Russian/Prussian Mennonite Groups." Given the vacillating nature of his own terminology, it is not surprising to find Unruh insisting that a correct formulation of the problem was an essential aspect for discovering the truth in the matter, a truth he had committed himself to in the oath he had taken as a doctoral candidate.

Despite Unruh's concern to formulate the question of Russian Mennonite origins correctly, there were problems with his approach. In the first instance, he had attempted an initial formulation of his thesis in the highly-charged political atmosphere of the 1917 Moscow Congress. And when he had finally turned to an investigation of the problem in the mid 1930s, his point of departure had been the Russian context, then the Prussian/Polish context, and finally the East Frisian context. In other words, rather than beginning with Dutch sources and working his way forward to a resolution of the question, Unruh began at the end where he had himself been heavily and personally involved, and worked his way backwards. In doing so, the issues generated by World War I remained paramount in his mind and gave him a kind of tunnel vision into the past, limiting greatly his lateral historical insight into the sixteenth century.

From his concern over the formulation of the problem, Unruh turned to what had always been his central assertion: the Frisian linguistic nature of the region in the Netherlands from which the Mennonite refugees had originally come, and the relationship of this Frisian language to the neighboring emerging languages.

Unruh began his actual historical analysis with an investigation into Anabaptist origins in general and Dutch Mennonite origins in particular. Though he had earlier, while in Russia, accepted and even lauded Keller's explanation of these origins, he now rejected them. He had, by now, read much of the Dutch literature on the subject, but despite this he was ultimately unable to provide a more persuasive answer to the question of the relationship between Melchiorites, Münsterites, and Mennonites (not to speak of the Swiss Brethren) than had Peter Braun in 1914 whom he criticized for his then adherence to Keller. Like many another intellectual historian unable to explain a phenomenon, he enlisted the aid of the *Zeitgeist*, stating: "But there were *Taufgesinnte* even before Melchior Hofmann! We have seen that baptistic ideas *were in the air* [my emphasis], coming from movements like the Waldenses and those in Zurich [the Swiss Brethren], as well as emanating from the *Devotio Moderna* [the Brethren of the Common Life]."<sup>29</sup> And yet, despite his lack of clarity in this central issue, Unruh nevertheless

posited the same distinction between *Wiedertäufer* and *Taufgesinnte* his Russian Mennonite colleagues had made on the basis of a long oral tradition without knowing its source or historical justification.

As one proceeds through the pages of Unruh's *opus* where he dealt with the regions in which Dutch Anabaptism proper originated and flourished, it becomes clear that his emphasis upon Frisia and the Frisians as the movement's center has a purpose: he intended to argue that the vast majority of Prussian Mennonites had been of Frisian origin and had therefore quite naturally found at least a temporary refuge from persecution in East Friesland. He called the latter territory a gathering place for Anabaptist refugees from various "Germanic" and even Swiss regions. With this as background, Unruh finally stated his thesis unequivocally: "... that is to say – this is our thesis! – the main artery (eigentliche Schlagader) of Dutch Anabaptism in this early period lay in the regions with an overwhelmingly Frisian population."<sup>30</sup>

To support this "Frisian" argument, Unruh contended that Menno Simons had established his church in East Friesland, a territory that had never belonged to "Holland." He cited the work of E. Beninga who had, according to Unruh, argued that Anabaptism was "virtually a native growth of East Friesland, arising there first in 1528 without any outside influence."<sup>31</sup> In order to expand this argument to include "Germanic" elements, Unruh asserted that a not inconsiderable number of Menno's followers had been religious refugees from Switzerland and other parts of the German empire. In any case, he continued, there was so little difference between the Dutch and German languages at the time that they virtually constituted one language. Early "Dutch" Mennonites could therefore be said to have spoken German. The only problem with this line of argumentation was that the historical documents everyone, including Unruh, relied upon spoke of the Mennonites as coming from "Holland." Peter Braun's interpretation reflected this fact; as did those of Szper, Bergmann, Mannhardt, and even Horst Penner. Unruh, on the other hand, contended that "Holland" had become a political reality only after the Dutch Revolution of the second half of the sixteenth century, after the Mennonites had departed for Poland and Prussia. There was some truth to Unruh's contention, as J. S. Postma was later to concede. On the other hand, however, Unruh tried far too hard to locate the center of the movement in East Friesland, even telling H. J. Braun in 1944 that "The Brauns are East Frisians. East Friesland never belonged to Holland." One had therefore to substitute the more malleable term "Netherlands" for Holland.

There are, of course, a number of problems with Unruh's thesis. First, Unruh virtually excluded all political developments in the Netherlands from his considerations. Thus he refused to take seriously, if at all, the

separate political development of the Duchy of Burgundy (a territory encompassing nearly all of modern Holland and Belgium) from that of the Holy Roman Empire. Such a separate development was hardly affected by the dynastic marriage between Maximilian of Austria and Mary of Burgundy that temporarily brought the two entities together between 1493 and 1556. Whereas Burgundy was added to the imperial lands when Maximilian became emperor in 1493, it remained a separate political entity. Already in 1494 he turned it over to his son Philip, from whom Charles (later Charles V) inherited it at his father's death in 1506. Thus, only from 1519, when Charles became Holy Roman Emperor, until his abdication in 1556 did Burgundy come under imperial rule and only very briefly became part of the Holy Roman Empire. Beginning in 1524, Charles took over Friesland, then Groningen, Drente, Overijssel, Utrecht and Gelderland. In 1548 he declared all these lands to belong to Burgundy and constituted the latter as a district of the empire. But already in 1556, when Charles abdicated, these lands were turned over to his son Philip, King of Spain, while the empire went to his brother Ferdinand. Thus, Burgundy can be considered a part of the empire only during the years 1548-1556. Now, if Burgundy became "German" at the time Charles V declared it a district of the empire in 1548, then it became "Spanish" when he turned it over to his son Philip in 1556. Though it is obvious that the Dutch were more closely related to the peoples of the Holy Roman Empire than to those of Spain, the illogic of the above argument is only too apparent, and it applies to both sides of the issue. One must therefore seek the beginning of this separate political development somewhere in the Middle Ages – Dutch historians trace it to the twelfth century – well before the age of the Reformation. This separate development continued through the Reformation period despite Burgundy's temporary incorporation into the empire from 1548-1556. The establishment of the Dutch Republic *sans* Belgium (Flanders) in 1609, and officially recognized in the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, merely confirmed a process that would have taken place sooner or later in any case. Switzerland underwent a similar development, though it gained a *de facto* (if not *de jure*) independence already in the twelfth century. It, too, was officially recognized only by the Peace of Westphalia. From this perspective, the use of the term "Holländer" in the Polish charters dealing with Mennonites of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries does have a certain political justification, even if one pushes the use of the term back into the sixteenth century when the process of state building in the Netherlands had not yet fully run its course. Perhaps that was the reason why Unruh consistently and repeatedly rejected a "political" resolution of the Mennonite *Herkunftsfrage*.

A second major problem with Unruh's thesis has to do with his

emphasis on East Friesland as a haven for Anabaptists fleeing religious persecution. To make the case that these Anabaptists were primarily of Frisian extraction, Unruh should at the very least have investigated the nature, extent and principal regions where persecution took place in the Netherlands. This he failed to do, however. He was therefore forced to assume that the majority of these refugees were Frisians. He assumed further that East Friesland, as a gathering place for Anabaptist refugees, was in many ways a kind of way-station on the road to Prussia and Poland. But this, too, does not appear to have been the case, for the refugees fleeing to Danzig and beyond did so by ship, taking advantage of the flourishing Dutch merchant trade in the North Sea/Baltic region. This meant that they had to leave from one or the other of the great ports of the Netherlands.<sup>32</sup>

There is not doubt, as A. L. E. Verheyden has pointed out, that persecution in the Netherlands was more severe than elsewhere in the empire simply because these lands were directly under Charles' jurisdiction.<sup>33</sup> Unlike the haphazard enforcement in many of the other territories and cities of the empire, in the Netherlands, as in Austria, the imperial laws against heresy could be more rigorously enforced. Nonetheless, the arrival of Dutch Anabaptist refugees in the regions around Danzig and Elbing is traditionally given as beginning about 1542, the year in which Charles placed a price on Menno's head. If that is indeed the case, few may have arrived because of persecution before Charles' abdication in 1556. Indeed, in the Prussian and Russian Mennonite memory the real persecution of Dutch Mennonites began with the arrival of the Duke of Alba in the Netherlands in 1567.<sup>34</sup> If this was the real beginning of the Mennonite exodus from the Netherlands, then the refugees probably came primarily from Flanders, later Belgium, where Alba created the worst havoc. Verheyden traces these events, arguing that most of those who fled did so initially to the north into an increasingly Protestant region, and only later continued on to Prussia and Poland.<sup>35</sup> In any case, as we observed earlier, the Netherlands rather than Prussia should have been the point of departure for Unruh's study.

This latter point was made somewhat obliquely, though nonetheless forcefully, by Johan Sjouke Postma in his 1959 study entitled *Das niederländische Erbe der presussisch-russländischen Mennoniten in Europa, Asien und Amerika* (The Dutch Heritage of the Prussian-Russian Mennonites in Europe, Asia and America).<sup>36</sup> There he wrote:

... The most comprehensive study of this subject to date is undoubtedly B. H. Unruh's "Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen im 16., 18. und 19. Jahrhundert," Karlsruhe 1955. But Unruh himself points out a shortcoming of his study: the Dutch sources could

not be adequately investigated.<sup>37</sup>

Such a statement takes on increased significance in light of what we have called Unruh's historical tunnel vision, for, as Postma proceeded to demonstrate in a most generous fashion, this was the fatal flaw of Unruh's study.

Basing his analysis upon Dutch scholarship and Dutch sources, Postma then began to demonstrate that the Netherlands had indeed begun to separate from the empire already at the time of the Investiture Controversy of the twelfth century. He therefore regarded Unruh's contention that there were few differences between the two countries until much later as erroneous.<sup>38</sup> In passing, he also drew attention to errors in Unruh's analysis deriving from false etymologies of Dutch words. Then Postma turned to the regions from which the Anabaptist refugees might have fled, arguing that persecution was the key to their emigration and, just as Braun and a number of other persons had postulated, Alva's persecution the main cause<sup>39</sup>. Nor had East Friesland become a gathering place or transition station for such refugees; the majority, he argued, would have made their way directly to Danzig by water. The key question therefore, according to Postma, was: "Where and when did conditions exist that would have motivated the quiet farmer and city dweller to give up his home and go in search of another?" The time, Postma said, was the period from 1567 to 1594; and the region where Alva wrecked his carnage was the southern part of the Netherlands. The majority of the refugees came from the South, migrated to Frisia, and from there took ship to Danzig. Postma therefore contended that the regions on which Unruh had focused his study, Frisia and the eastern parts of the Netherlands including East Friesland, had not been primary regions of persecution. Indeed, these were areas in which many a persecuted person found a permanent sanctuary.<sup>40</sup> After a lengthy analysis, Postma arrived at the following conclusions. First, only very few refugees would have come from the area around Groningen, and those that did come from there would have come during the years 1580-1594. Refugees from Friesland would only have come before 1559, though many Flemish moved on from there to the East between 1567 and 1576. Holland, with the largest and most important Mennonite congregations in the Netherlands, suffered severe persecution before 1559 as well as between 1567 and 1572, losing many members to emigration. Refugees from Seeland would have gone to England, but there were not many. Utrecht also had few emigrants. Flanders, however, was a different story, producing a constant stream of refugees who began leaving well before Alva's arrival and whose numbers increased dramatically afterwards; here emigration lasted the longest. The same could be said for

Brabant, but only after 1559. Other regions lost only few persons to emigration because of persecution. Furthermore, these emigrants would have proceeded by way of Emden to the East only between 1544 and 1559; those departing between 1567 and 1572 would have traveled directly by ship. Postma therefore concluded that the evidence did not support Unruh's "Dreierfriesland" theory; the central thesis of Unruh's *magnum opus* had been found wanting.

Postma then proceeded to arguments that placed other Unruh contentions in doubt. In Chapter IV he made the case that the Frisian/Flemish controversy, carried over onto the Polish/Prussian scene very early, originated in the Harlingen Church because of the influx of Anabaptist refugees from Flanders into Frisia – that is, around 1566, some five years after Menno's death. From here the division spread quickly to other congregations, even to those without any Flemish members, thus removing any strictly "territorial" overtones from the division. The terms "Frisian" and "Flemish," Postma therefore concluded, were meaningless as designations of places of origin. Indeed, he argued that *Holland*, as the ever-growing center of the movement, rather than Frisia, increasingly became the place where the Flemish Anabaptists sought sanctuary. The second wave of the Anabaptist emigration to the East therefore did not consist of Frisians, but of Franks coming from the heartland of the Netherlands. Even East Friesland, he concluded, had a Flemish, not a Frisian, majority of Anabaptists.<sup>41</sup>

Whereas Unruh had argued that the majority of the Prussian Mennonite names had a Frisian origin, Postma concluded otherwise in Chapter V. Of some 567 names listed by Unruh, only 82 were of Frisian origin. The vast majority were non-Frisian. Furthermore, of these 567 names, 462 were of Dutch (*niederländisch* as opposed to Frisian or *niederdeutsch*) origin.<sup>42</sup> Only about 100 names could have come from the border regions between the Empire and the Netherlands, and only 40 were German, with 10 being of Slavic origin. Postma therefore concluded that at least 500 of the 567 names were of Dutch (*niederländisch*) origin.

In Chapter VI Postma turned to the Dutch influence among the Prussian Mennonites and the influence of the latter in the Netherlands. Frisian congregations in the East had constituted the smallest group. With one exception, he continued, all early ministers in the Prussian/Polish congregations had come from the Netherlands. As late as the mid-eighteenth century the Haarlem and Amsterdam congregations had even referred to themselves as "Danziger congregations." Children of wealthy Danzig Mennonites came to Amsterdam for their education, to find a wife, to be baptized, etc. Indeed, Dutch archives contained a rich correspondence carried on between the two regions in the Dutch

language. In fact, Postma argued, the Frisian dialect was never spoken in the Danzig regions,<sup>43</sup> one letter even asserting that "they [the Prussian/Polish Mennonites] were nearly all of *niederländischer Herkunft*, a statement he confirmed in detail."<sup>44</sup> Only in the mid-eighteenth century did this correspondence begin to die out because of the language change to German in Prussia. From this evidence Postma concluded that the use of the Dutch language in Poland/Prussia by the Mennonites had been much more widespread than even Peter Braun had assumed.<sup>45</sup> And during this entire time it had been the Dutch government that had periodically intervened on behalf of the Prussian Mennonites with the Polish and Prussian authorities; from time to time Prussian Mennonites had even returned to live in the Netherlands.

As a final test of Unruh's thesis Postma turned to the language issue specifically in the last chapter of his study. Here he began by repudiating Unruh's assertion that Menno "must have absorbed *das Ostersche* [a mixed dialect] with his mother's milk."<sup>46</sup> He demonstrated convincingly that the Dutch language had been the language of home and church well into the eighteenth century, especially in cities like Danzig and Königsberg with strong commercial ties to the Netherlands. Thus, not only with respect to Unruh's central thesis, but also with regard to a number of his related and supporting arguments, Postma – always in a gentle and generous manner – provided a devastating repudiation of Unruh's scholarship.

The unkindest cut of all to Unruh's scholarship, however, came from the pen of the Soviet sociologist, A. N. Ipatov, in a 1977 publication entitled, appropriately enough, *Kto takie Mennonity?* Immediately translated into German, Ipatov's study was an unqualified endorsement of the principal conclusions reached in Peter Braun's brochure of 1915 and a frontal attack on Unruh's extensive scholarship, a man whom Ipatov called a fascist collaborator.<sup>47</sup>

Ipatov began with an extended defense of the Prussian/Russian Mennonite distinction between *Taufgesinnte* and *Wiedertäufer*, Mennonites and Münsterites, and then proceeded to the question of the Mennonites' ethnic origin. Rejecting even Bondar's, Pisarevsky's, and the Tsarist government's wartime arguments that Mennonites were cultural Germans, Ipatov consciously opposed Benjamin Unruh in arguing that the Dutch and Flemish of the sixteenth century were not Germanic.<sup>48</sup> Secondly, he made the case that the German minority in Poland was not in a position to assimilate the Mennonites before the partitions of Poland and the Mennonite emigration to Russia. Only afterwards, when the German Prussian government consciously began the process of assimilating the Mennonites, did this begin to change. As a result, only those "Prussian" Mennonites who departed for Russia in

1789 and 1803 successfully avoided being assimilated; those who remained behind did not. Only the religious influence of Pietism had begun to break down Mennonite isolation in Poland, Ipatov asserted.<sup>49</sup> And, Ipatov argued, only the nation state of Prussia, and later Russia when she reached this stage in her development had pursued policies of assimilation. "Medieval" empires or kingdoms like the Holy Roman Empire and Poland respectively had not done so.

Ipatov therefore concluded that the most important event in the Mennonite linguistic transition from the Dutch to the German language were the partitions of Poland after the Seven Years' War, and the Tsarist government's decision upon the Mennonite entry into Russia to mandate that all colonist correspondence and official contact with the St. Petersburg government be carried on in the German language. But even so, the Tsarist government never spoke of the Mennonites as Germans in its official documents. Only during World War I did she begin to do so, and that because of the war hysteria. Such a transition, Ipatov asserted, could even be seen in the work before and after the war of such Russian writers as S. I. Bondar and G. G. Pisarevsky, a transition facilitated by the fact that all foreigners in Russia were called Germans.

Mennonites, Ipatov concluded, were therefore an ethno-religious group of Dutch extraction, no matter what Unruh or other fascist bourgeois historians might think. Peter Braun and J. S. Postma, he asserted, had been right.<sup>50</sup> If Ipatov was right, how did the Dutch/Prussian/Russian Mennonites develop from an essentially religious group to an ethno-religious movement? It is that question that is addressed in the epilogue.



## Who are the (Russian) Mennonites?

*Like monks in a monastery, ironies pervade the history of mankind. Acutely aware of this, Renaissance humanists spoke of fate or fortune as controlling at least half of all the affairs of man. And who could fathom the capricious nature of Dame Fortuna? Transformed into a kinder, gentler Providence by the reformers, she nonetheless relinquished little of her power. Nor were the ways of God any less inscrutable than those of fortune. Irony and fate (or Providence) are terms employed to attempt to explain the inexplicable, and one of the more apparent ironies of the age of the Reformation must surely be the fact that the major pacifist branch of the Christian Church – the Anabaptist/Mennonite movement – not only arose in close proximity to, and in the wake of, two of the most memorable revolutionary events in sixteenth-century Germany, but also became nearly inextricably associated with them. The Swiss Anabaptists appeared in Zurich and its environs at the very moment the Peasants' War exploded in the Swiss-German borderlands – a fateful (providential?) conjunction of events many contemporary observers could only interpret in a causal relationship. And so it appeared nearly inevitable that, sooner or later, Thomas Müntzer, widely regarded as the villain of the piece, should have the paternity of Anabaptism thrust upon him. Menno Simons, in his turn, “departed from the papacy” in the highly charged atmosphere of the sack of Anabaptist Muenster, bringing Dutch Mennonites forever into association with Jan of Leyden, king of the revolutionary “New Jerusalem.” Whereas Müntzer’s paternity was the product, ultimately, of one of Heinrich Bullinger’s more imaginative, not-so-immaculate historical conceptions, resting on a presumptive meeting of the protagonists that has never quite materialized from the historical record, the second had much more tangible evidence to commend it. After all, had not Menno’s younger brother, Pieter, been executed in the armed insurrection of Münsterite co-conspirators at the old cloister near Bolsward, and had not Menno himself, in the 1539 edition of his **Fundamentboek**, called the Münsterites “lieve broeders,” a term he deleted from the second 1554 revised edition, thereby incriminating himself? . . .*

— Abraham Friesen, “Menno and Münster: The Man and the Movement.”

**A**bout the time Hitler came to power in Germany, Ethelbert Stauffer – Protestant theologian of Mennonite extraction<sup>1</sup> – published an essay entitled “The Anabaptist Theology of Martyrdom.”<sup>2</sup> Correctly capturing one of the salient aspects of sixteenth-century Anabaptism, the essay indirectly drew attention not only to the absence of such a theology in the contemporary German Mennonite Church

(the latter having all but abandoned the principles upon which such a theology had been founded) it also inadvertently pointed to one of the central factors that helped to shape Prussian/Russian Mennonite identity. The essay fell largely on deaf ears, however, for during the Nazi years the majority of German Mennonites gave at least tacit if not overt support to the politics of persecution under Hitler.

The essay did more. Written well before the appearance of the Post-Modernist polygenesis theory of Anabaptist origins, it pointed to a major difference between those groups in the Radical Reformation that tolerated and even advocated the use of violence, and those that conceived of the Christian life as one of non-violent suffering. It has, of course, often enough been asserted that suffering persecution in early Dutch Anabaptism during the years 1529-1535 led directly to the advocacy of violence, at first for defensive purposes, later in order to execute the wrath of God itself. If true, this would indicate that suffering and vengeance are not as unrelated as might at first appear; indeed, that they may simply be two sides of the same coin. This appears, at least according to the "Confession" of Obbe Philips, to have been the case in pre-1535 Dutch Melchioritism; though Obbe and his brother Dirk early on opposed the Münsterite politics of apocalyptic vengeance.<sup>3</sup> In other words, there were some notable exceptions to this rule in Dutch Anabaptism even before 1535. Bernard Rothmann appears to have been an exception of another kind, for he turned away from his pacifism under the impact of Jan Matthys' and Jan van Leyden's arguments concerning the "time of harvest," that is, the end of the age and the coming of God's wrath upon the godless.<sup>4</sup>

The reverse of the above argument has, however, also been made, that is, that it was the failure of revolution that made pacifists of Menno and his followers.<sup>5</sup> But this is most certainly not the case. Indeed, as I argued in a recent essay, Menno's non-resistant suffering attitude resulted from his conversion, a conversion that took place while, or shortly after, having attacked the Münsterite leader in his "Against the Blasphemy of Jan of Leiden."<sup>6</sup> Rather than see the issue of martyrdom versus violence, at least in Dutch Anabaptism, as two sides of the same coin, the evidence at this preliminary stage of investigation appears to indicate that a not insignificant struggle, beginning inconspicuously enough with Obbe and Dirk Philip's rejection of Münsterite violence but picking up momentum with Menno and his movement, took place between the two forces after 1535, with the followers of Menno, as Johan Huizinga once observed, becoming the most peaceful of all Dutch citizens.<sup>7</sup> And they did so during a time in which the Anabaptists were more severely persecuted than had been the case prior to 1535. This still needs to be confirmed through more extensive histori-

cal studies, but if true it would indicate that the way in which radicals approached the use or rejection of violence in the sixteenth century may indeed provide us with a major indication of the boundaries that separated the two factions, and Stauffer's 1933 essay would then remain a telling statement in this regard.<sup>8</sup>

To argue, however, as Hans-Jürgen Goertz did in a recent essay, that present-day Mennonites cannot tell which of these two strands constitutes true Anabaptism is, quite frankly, unconvincing. He put it in the following words:

... Which Anabaptism is the real, genuine, normative one: the Bible-believing, free-church type or the apocalyptic vengeful type, the pacifist or the militant-revolutionary? *Historically* [my emphasis] this question is unanswerable. The entire project of using the authority of the past for present purposes in this manner was an illusion of the older Anabaptist historiography.<sup>9</sup>

Yet, having rejected the "older Anabaptist historiography" in this categorical manner, Goertz proceeded to do precisely what he had just accused the older generation of Anabaptist scholars of doing: he attempted to use the past for present purposes. Just this time it was his *polygenesis* past that was to be used to determine present-day Mennonite identity. And in this past the "apocalyptic vengeful type" of Anabaptist was just as "normative" as the "Bible-believing, free church type." To be sure, Goertz did state that the question regarding normativity could not be answered from *an historical perspective*. He should have modified his position even further, however, and stated: "from a social historian's perspective." Then he might have had a point, for social history places its emphasis upon the context from within which an idea or concept emerges, not so much upon the intellectual source of an idea. And in the process it tends to denude concepts of all intellectual content, even the concept of conversion, so central in the case of Menno Simons and his followers.<sup>10</sup>

All of this might only be mildly disconcerting if Goertz had not himself, in a lengthy 1975 essay (before the advent of the polygenesis thesis), assaulted his Prussian Mennonite forebears for their defection from "normative" Anabaptist values in their support of Adolf Hitler during World War II. So telling was his attack that a number of persons felt compelled to come to the defense of the German Mennonites of the time.<sup>11</sup> But if what Goertz asserted above with regard to the two branches of sixteenth-century Anabaptism is correct, what justified his attack on those who "slipped back" into the Müntzer/Münsterite "apocalyptic vengeful type" during the Nazi era? By what "norm" was he operating in this instance? The point I wish to make here is the fol-

lowing: to use the polygenesis model to try to determine Mennonite identity in the twenty-first century is a colossal piece of arrogance based upon an improper use of historiography. As I wrote in 1998,

... The latter [i.e., historiography] can at best be used to trace the development of an interpretive tradition; it cannot, however, in and of itself confirm an interpretation. The latter must always be done on the basis of the historical evidence. Therefore, all that the Stayer, Deppermann, and Packull study proves is that there were in fact these three major interpretive traditions. Most scholars already knew this.

But what is more disturbing about that study is the fact that all three historiographical traditions end in one or the other of the three authors' own studies. This is a development worthy of the great Hegel himself. The individual studies, therefore, serve to determine both the point of departure as well as the culmination of each tradition. Should such authors be so critical of the "Bender school"?<sup>12</sup>

Nonetheless, the authors of the polygenesis thesis have attempted to substitute *their* "normative" interpretation for that of the "Bender school." In doing so they have, however, ignored a fundamental tenet of their own Post-Modernist creed: that there are no "normative" criteria at all.

Such considerations aside, the historian of ideas is compelled to recognize that the Protestant Reformation, of which the Radical Reformation was a part, did indeed set up a norm, a standard, by means of which it sought to judge matters of faith and church. And it was Luther who did so as early as the 1519 Leipzig Disputation when he proclaimed his fundamental Protestant principle of *scriptura sola*. To be sure, not everyone accepted the Scriptures as the sole Christian norm: Catholics continued to regard Scripture as *a* norm, but subject to the interpretation of the living church as the ultimate norm. And the Mystics/Spiritualists regarded the "written Word" as subordinate to the "inner Word" imparted immediately to the believer by the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, for the vast majority of the Protestants, peaceful Anabaptists included, the Bible became normative, even though both Lutherans and Zwinglians at times attempted to use "escape clauses" of one kind or another when confronted by matters drawn from this norm they could not accept. Observant Catholics recognized the dilemma created for the Magisterial Reformers in their quarrels with the Anabaptists. John Eck wrote for all of them when he stated in his *Enchiridion*:

Even though, in the preceding and following articles, the new Christians [reformers] set up the principle that they would accept nothing that could not be defended with clear biblical references; after the Anabaptists had arisen they could not defeat them and were forced to give up their principle (foundation)

and concede that many things had to be believed and practiced that were not written (contained) [in Scripture], as Zwingli asserted with respect to the baptism of Mary and also the baptism of children.<sup>13</sup>

In a sixteenth-century Protestant sense, therefore, there was most certainly a norm by means of which reformers sought to determine what was and what was not true Christianity. And, in our case, what was or was not true Anabaptism. When asked by their interrogators: "Why do you trust so much in the heresies of that damned arch-heretic, Menno Simons?" the Dutch Anabaptists replied: "We trust (or build) not upon Menno Simons, nor upon any man." And in a discussion of the necessity of sponsors at the baptism of infants with some Dutch Anabaptists, a Catholic priest himself observed: "I could very well show you this [the legitimacy of sponsors] from the ancient fathers, *but you Anabaptists will rely most firmly on the holy Scriptures alone* [my emphasis], so that you will not hearken to the ancient fathers or teachers of the holy church." Consequently, Catholics even argued that with regard to this norm, the peaceful Anabaptists had "out-principled" the reformers who had set up the norm.<sup>14</sup> By this historic sixteenth-century Protestant norm even Goertz would have to concede the normative nature of what he himself called the "Bible-believing, free church type." Certainly, as we have just seen, the Dutch followers of Menno adopted this norm as their own. It therefore has much more to commend itself to the present-day Mennonite believer than the polygenesis norm set up by Goertz and the authors of the thesis, for it is grounded in the intellectual history of the sixteenth century, not in the historiographical speculations of a few Post-Modernist scholars. The polygenesis thesis, as an historiographical artifact, is no norm at all and therefore cannot serve as the basis for establishing any kind of Mennonite identity. On the other hand, Stauffer's criteria of martyrdom, as the sequel will demonstrate, is an excellent point of departure for an analysis of Dutch/Prussian/Russian Mennonite identity. And it is important at this point to stress the phrase, "point of departure," with respect to the "creation" of the Prussian/Russian Mennonite identity.<sup>15</sup> For, to paraphrase Alfred Lord Tennyson, Russian Mennonite identity was formed by "all that they had met" along the way.<sup>16</sup>

The appeal to this Protestant norm enabled the "Bible-believing, free church type" to reject the "apocalyptic vengeful type's" resort to violence from the very inception of the various movements. This was as true of the Swiss Brethren in Zurich as it was of Menno Simons in the Netherlands. Nor did either of the above regard the positions in conflict to be two relatively neutral alternatives between which one might choose. Thus, as early as the famous September, 1524 letter to Thomas Müntzer,

Conrad Grebel and his friends turned back Müntzer's call to arms in defense of the gospel, stating categorically: "... the gospel and its adherents are not to be protected by the sword, nor are they thus to protect themselves, which, as we hear from our brother, is thy opinion and practice." They bolstered this assertion with the authority of the New Testament, proclaiming: "True Christian believers are sheep among wolves, sheep for the slaughter; they must be baptized in anguish and affliction, tribulation, persecution, suffering and death . . . Neither do they use the worldly sword or war, since all killing has ceased with them – unless, indeed, we would still be of the old law [the Old Testament] . . ."<sup>17</sup>

Menno's position is only a little more complex, but even he opposed the use of violence by the Münsterites early on. In his 1535 "Against the Blasphemy of Jan of Leiden" written before his conversion, he remarked: "By the grace of God we will also write a little about warfare, that Christians are not allowed to fight with the sword."<sup>18</sup> Menno's opposition to war and violence was deepened by his conversion for it was the latter that made him willing to suffer persecution for the cause of Christ. This is clearly reflected in the first three pieces Menno wrote after his conversion: the 1536 "The Spiritual Rebirth," the 1537 "Meditations on the Twenty-fifth Psalm," and the 1538 "The New Birth." Proceeding from a new-found faith and reflecting his conversion, unlike his "Blasphemy," Menno's three tracts are informed by a new way of reading the Scriptures. He, too, could now have said: *credo ut intelligam* (I believe therefore I understand). And with this new understanding came a willingness to suffer with Christ. Little wonder, then, that Menno compared himself to Paul whose conversion had also transformed both his understanding and his actions. Writing in his meditations on the Twenty-fifth Psalm, Menno observed:

... Paul, Thy chosen vessel, raged like a roaring lion and ranting wolf in Thy holy mountain; nevertheless Thy grace shone about him in his blindness; it illuminated him, called him from heaven and chose him as an apostle and servant in Thy house. I also, dear Lord, the greatest of all sinners, and the least among all the saints, am not worthy to be called Thy child or servant, for I have sinned against heaven and before Thee. Although I resisted in former times Thy precious Word and Thy holy will with all my powers, and with full understanding contended against Thy manifest truth, taught and lived and sought my own flesh, praise, and honor, more than Thy righteousness, honor, word, and truth; nevertheless, Thy fatherly grace did not forsake me, *converted me to another mind, led me with Thy right hand, and taught me by Thy Holy Spirit* until of my own choice I declared war upon the world, the flesh, and the devil, and renounced my ease, peace, glory, desire, and physical prosperity and *willingly submitted to the heavy cross of my Lord Jesus* that I might inherit the promised kingdom with all the soldiers of God and the disciples of Christ [my emphasis] . . .<sup>19</sup>

Clearly, Menno had moved over into the camp described by Stauffer where only the sword of the Spirit and the Word of God was employed, no longer the physical sword.<sup>20</sup>

Whereas, according to Obbe Philips, persecution had induced the Melchiorites to don the "armor of David" in order to battle the "godless," a converted Grebel and Menno willingly suffered persecution for the sake of Christ. It befell them not because of anything they had done, but because their conversions had transplanted them from the kingdom of this world into the kingdom of Christ between which a natural enmity existed. In his letter to Müntzer, Grebel therefore argued that true Christians had to expect to be persecuted by "the world." And Menno observed in his meditations on the Twenty-fifth Psalm:

But as soon as I with Solomon saw that all was vanity and with Paul I esteemed all as nothingness, as soon as I renounced the proud ungodliness of the world and sought Thee and Thy kingdom which will abide forever, then I found everywhere the counterpart and reverse. Heretofore I was honored; now abased. Once there was pleasantness, now sorrow. Once I was a friend, now I pass for an enemy. Then I was considered wise, now a fool. Then pious, now wicked; then a Christian, now a heretic, yes, an abomination and an evildoer to all<sup>21</sup>

Rather than retaliate in kind, however, Menno and Grebel, like the monks of late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, turned to Christ's Sermon on the Mount for counsel. They knew that Christ had said: "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." But in the Sermon on the Mount he promised to bless those who were "persecuted for righteousness sake," or if people reviled and persecuted them, "saying all manner of evil against [them] falsely, for my sake." He encouraged his followers to revel in such persecution – to be "exceeding glad" – for their reward would be great in heaven. Persecution should not upset them, "for so persecuted they the prophets before you." Menno and his followers internalized these words of Christ because of their experiences. Persecution and martyrdom became a part of their lives as Christ's disciples. They became critical aspects of what constituted their identity as Mennonite Christians, of who they were. It is perhaps no accident, therefore, that the major Anabaptist martyrology to come out of the Reformation era came out of the Dutch Mennonite tradition, beginning with the sixteenth-century *Het Offer des Herren* and culminating in Van Braght's seventeenth-century *Martyrs Mirror*.<sup>22</sup> Persecution and martyrdom not only marked their identity as Christians, however, they legitimated their status as true believers. Mennonites wore them as badges of distinction.

Dutch Mennonites were confirmed in this self-understanding by the virtually uniform conviction expounded from Luther on and found in

all the great martyrologies of the sixteenth century: that suffering persecution was a mark of the true church. Writing in his "Against Hanswurst," Luther observed:

Ninth, nobody can deny that we experience the same suffering (as St. Peter says [1 Pet. 5:9] ) as our brethren in the world. We are persecuted in every place, strangled, drowned, hanged and tormented in every way for the sake of the word. Our lot is like that of the ancient church, and in this way we are beyond measure like it, so that we may well say we are the true ancient church . . . .<sup>23</sup>

And Sebastian Franck wrote in his *Chronica* of 1531: ". . . the true church persecutes no one, but only suffers persecution."<sup>24</sup> All Protestant martyrologists agreed. They argued that the Roman Church became an apostate church when she began to persecute religious dissenters; indeed, she became the "Babylonian Whore" described in Revelation 17 who was "drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of martyrs." Sooner or later, however, virtually all of the Protestant churches themselves became persecuting churches, or at least recommended the persecution of dissenters from their positions to their magistrates. Only the peaceful Anabaptists and Mennonites refused to do so,<sup>25</sup> at least until 1860 in Russia when, for all intents and purposes, they had themselves become a territorial church.<sup>26</sup>

To demonize one's opponents was an integral part of persecution; it usually preceded persecution and was intended to justify it. Against the Anabaptists, this demonizing primarily took the form of associating the "Bible-believing, free church type" with the "apocalyptic vengeful type," bringing with it charges of sedition and revolution which the former rejected. For the Swiss Anabaptists it came early with Zwingli's accusations of sedition against them, and the association of Mantz and Grebel with Thomas Müntzer in Heinrich Bullinger's 1561 history. For the Dutch followers of Menno, the accusations seemed more tangible and more immediate; they took the form of associating Menno with the despised Münsterites. After all, was there not continuity from the Münsterites through Obbe and Dirk Philips directly to Menno? And when Obbe left the movement in 1542, writing a "Confession" in 1560 that was published in 1584 and again in 1609, these accusations were given added credence. Enemies of the movement seized upon the confession as proof of the "gross errors and insidious threats" to be found in Anabaptism, while many followers of Menno denounced it as a fraud.<sup>27</sup> But no matter how one interpreted Obbe's "Confession," Menno had apparently been both baptized and ordained by Obbe Philips who now felt himself tainted by the Münsterite stigma. How could Menno not also, like Obbe himself and his brother Dirk, have been a member of



the Münsterite sect, especially since his brother, Pieter, had been executed in the aftermath of the revolutionary take-over of the Old Cloister just outside of Bolsward?

Such accusations were nearly immediately extended to all Anabaptists by an interpretive tradition employed by Luther, Melancthon, and virtually all other sixteenth century enemies of the Anabaptists, that was based on an intriguing theory of human behavior inherited by the age of the Reformation from the Ancients. Michael Grant, indeed, refers to it as a "tradition of ancient biography and psychology that people's inborn character remains with them unchanged, and that, if there does seem to be a change, it is only a revelation of pre-existent but hitherto latent features."<sup>28</sup> Based on such assumptions, for example, Tacitus described the "development" of Emperor Tiberius in the following manner:

His character had its different stages. While he was a private citizen or holding commands under Augustus, his life was blameless, and so was his reputation. While Germanicus and Drusus lived, he concealed his real self, cunningly affecting virtuous qualities. However, until his mother died there was good in Tiberius, as well as evil. Again, as long as he favored (or feared) Sejanus, the cruelty of Tiberius was detested, but his perversions unrevealed. Then fear vanished, and with it shame. Thereafter he expressed only his own personality – by unrestricted crime and infamy.

This theory is problematic enough when applied to individuals, and Grant calls it a "tradition of ancient *biography*." But when it is applied to entire movements, especially movements as diverse as even most sixteenth-century observers considered Anabaptism to be, it becomes downright pernicious. In the case of individuals the theory could apply if in fact the person, for example in our case Thomas Müntzer, was reputed to have done reprehensible things. However, no matter how fundamental the differences between revolutionaries like Müntzer and the Münsterites, on the one hand, and those who rejected violence in all its forms, on the other hand for example, the theory argues that the peaceful, too, would be revolutionaries had they but the opportunity. It was only the latter they lacked. Grebel's and Menno's protestations of non-violence had therefore to be rejected and their actions seen simply as the result of circumstances unfavorable for revolution in their particular regions. Their protestations of peace had to be regarded as a sham; their irenic rhetoric as an insidious disguise by means of which Anabaptists hoped to lure the unwitting "common man" into their trap. Absence of overt revolution, therefore, and even the multitude of Anabaptist/Mennonite martyrs, was no proof of Anabaptist innocence, for the actions of the "apocalyptic vengeful types" proved conclusively

that every last Anabaptist would act in exactly the same manner were he but given the opportunity. Every one of Münster's atrocities could therefore legitimately be imputed to all other members of the movement. Therefore, even though there might be no evidence of any connection between the "Bible-believing, free church type" and the "apocalyptic vengeful type," they were nevertheless all cut from one cloth. The only thing that separated the first from the second was opportunity. All of this was implied in the term "Anabaptist." No wonder Menno's followers sought to escape having it applied to them. Against such an argument there was no defense; no one could prove his or her innocence.

Now, Christ's statement in the Sermon on the Mount had made it clear that his disciples should rejoice if they were being persecuted "for righteousness sake" or if "all manner of evil" was being spoken against them, "falsely, for my sake." Were Dutch Mennonites really being falsely accused of being Münsterites? Were they truly being persecuted for righteousness sake? Was the evil spoken against them in fact being done for Christ's sake? In other words, were Menno's followers absolutely certain that their leader had not been tainted by an early association with Münster? The answer has to be that they were not. For whereas Menno appears to have been certain, many of his followers harbored doubts. If they were not certain, could Christ's promises apply to them? And if they were certain, why did Van Braght seek to free Menno from any taint of Münster by associating him with the medieval Waldenses in his *Martyrs Mirror*?<sup>29</sup> As late as the 1870s the Dutch Mennonite scholar, Christian Sepp, could observe that his fellow Doopsgezinde were still secretly afraid that someone, somewhere, would uncover evidence linking Menno to Münster. Even the Russian descendants of Menno's Dutch followers harbored such fears as late as the twentieth century. And well they should have, for the assertion of such a connection was to be found embedded in virtually all histories of the Reformation written by outsiders. Already articles of faith in the writings of a Luther and Melancthon, a Zwingli, a Calvin, and the English reformers; these denunciations, no less vicious in the writings of sixteenth-century Catholic polemicists, became a nearly unassailable truth in many if not most eighteenth and nineteenth-century historical accounts. Their massive dissemination and incessant repetition spread them around the world. Indeed, the echoes could be heard well into the twentieth century. We have seen these accusations raise their ugly head in far-away Russia. Even in America, John Lothrop Motley, who glorified the Dutch in their wars of liberation against the hated Spaniards in his three-volume 1855 *The Rise of the Dutch Republic*, could write of the Anabaptists:

There is no doubt that the Anabaptist delusion was so ridiculous and so loathsome, as to palliate or at least render intelligible the wrath with which they were regarded by all parties. The turbulence of the sect was alarming to constituted authority, its bestiality disgraceful to the cause of religious reformation. The leaders were among the most depraved of human creatures, as much distinguished for licentiousness, blasphemy and cruelty, as their followers for groveling superstition. The evil spirit, driven out of Luther, seemed, in orthodox eyes, to have taken possession of a herd of swine.<sup>30</sup>

How could the universal chorus of theologians and historians not be correct if it was universal? Were Mennonites really suffering for the sake of Christ? Perhaps it was the ambivalence about their past and this universal chorus of history that drove them from the study of their own history. When they did turn to it, it was to defend the theory of the Waldensian origin of the peaceful Anabaptists despite the absence of concrete evidence to substantiate it. This was as true of Van Braght and his successors in the Netherlands as it was of Martin Klaassen and those who came after him in Russia. To be sure, in Russia other reasons for defending the theory arose in the early twentieth century. No wonder Ludwig Keller became a hero to the European and Russian Mennonites during the last twenty years of the nineteenth century. He, at least for a season, seemed to relieve the Mennonites of the ambivalence about their past, an ambivalence that had persisted despite the fact that Dutch Mennonites had, in 1544 (only some ten years after the initiation of the Münster debacle), gotten Countess Anna of Oldenbourg to recognize the differences between the "Bible-believing, free church type" and the "apocalyptic vengeful type." As we have seen, this distinction was gradually incorporated in the *Schutzbrieife* granted to Mennonites throughout much of Europe, beginning with the one in East Friesland of 1626.<sup>31</sup> It even came to be incorporated in the laws of the city of Danzig. Outside historians and theologians, however, refused to accept the distinction.

The Swiss Brethren and early Dutch Mennonites, basing their theology on Erasmus' paraphrases of Christ's Great Commission and the Acts baptismal passages, had been a fearlessly mission-minded group, as a number of scholars have pointed out. But their proselytizing enthusiasm could not last forever. Nor could it be inherited, or even passed on, to succeeding generations. Worn out by persecution, the latter therefore signed agreements with the political authorities in which they promised to give up proselytizing in exchange for a limited religious toleration. Such a prohibition, beginning with the 1626 East Frisian *Schutzbrief*, became a common feature of all future agreements of this nature. Along with the prohibition to proselytize, the Mennonites were denied the right to have public houses of worship and were often dis-

criminated against economically by the local population. Not surprisingly, therefore, Mennonites virtually everywhere were transformed by internal as well as external constraints into the "quiet in the land" in a little over a century.<sup>32</sup> Instead of excelling at evangelism and, thereby, confrontation with the secular defenders of the territorial churches, Mennonites were forced to "hide their light under a bushel." The energy expended by earlier generations to win converts was put into excelling as craftsmen, farmers or even commercial entrepreneurs. Their thrift and sobriety made them attractive to officials who were interested in developing their mercantilist economies.<sup>33</sup> This, too, can be seen in the *Schutzbrieife* where Mennonites were forced to buy toleration by paying considerable sums in "protection money" to territorial princes during the chaos of the Thirty Years' War,<sup>34</sup> and were later called upon, as the 1664 Palatine *Schutzbrief* put it, "to rebuild and rehabilitate the land" devastated by the war.<sup>35</sup> Having acceded to the suppression of their religion, Mennonites turned their energy and creativity to the secular realm in order to prove their worth to rulers seeking to build or rebuild their economies; a secular realm their forefathers had despised for the sake of Christ's kingdom. Even the impact of Pietism in their ranks from the time of Johannes Deknatel (1689-1759) on, with its emphasis on an interior conversion of the heart, did not halt this development, though it did bring them into closer contact with a growing segment of the German population.

The process of making this transition is probably much more complex than we have made it, though the transition itself is obvious enough. As a result, however, the Mennonites living in Prussian regions under the suzerainty of the Polish kings began to change from a fundamentally religious to an ethno-religious group. Migration played an important role in this transition.

In the Netherlands, Mennonites could not be considered racially or ethnically alien; they were fellow Netherlanders at a time when loyalties were still largely local.<sup>36</sup> A national sentiment arose in the Northern Netherlands only in the battle for independence against the hated Spaniards in the course of the second half of the sixteenth century,<sup>37</sup> probably after the majority of the emigrants had left for the Baltic regions. What set them apart from their fellow countrymen were their religious convictions and practices. Even in the Vistula Delta to which they migrated, race and ethnicity did not become important factors. For when Mennonites first arrived there in the late 1540s, Netherlanders had already been in the region, both as merchants and settlers, since the thirteenth century, dominating virtually every aspect of Baltic trade and commerce.<sup>38</sup> A Dutch faction even played a powerful role at the court of Albrecht of Brandenburg in the sixteenth century, a role

probably not inconsequential in providing an initial toleration to Menno's followers. At the same time, the Dutch population in the region provided a certain amount of cover for Mennonites, allowing them to melt into existing Dutch communities or even to create new ones, especially since they had learned to moderate the expressions of their religion by this time. In this Baltic region where Netherlanders, Germans and Poles lived side-by-side under the rule of the Polish crown, race must therefore have remained much less of a factor than it was becoming in the more centralized emerging nation states, even the Northern Netherlands, where vernacular languages and a sense of national identity, stimulated by wars of liberation, were undergoing more aggressive developments.<sup>39</sup> In the Baltic context one could continue to converse in the Low German vernacular, maintain the more literate Dutch language for church and school (if school there was) and employ the Latin language for official documents. Given the still largely medieval system of Polish rule where dynastic relationships more often than not determined alliances and territorial boundaries, race and ethnicity were not of great moment. Nor, even, was citizenship since it pertained primarily in the free imperial cities and could be purchased for a price or passed down from generation to generation in a given city's prominent families.

And yet, if nothing else, Mennonites in Polish Prussia were in the process of being separated from their old homeland during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, not least of all because they did not participate in the development of the "Golden Age" of Dutch civilization as did their brothers and sisters back home. This age is usually dated from the 1579 Union of Utrecht, which united the Northern provinces in their opposition to Spain, to the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht that ended the Wars of Spanish Succession. As K. H. D. Haley has observed:

... during these 134 years the Dutch, in proportion to the size of their population, made a contribution second to none in the development of European civilization. In politics they were at the core of the resistance, first of all to the domination of the Spanish Empire, and then to Louis XIV; they held their own for a time with England and gained the position of a great power. In the economic life of Europe they made themselves indispensable, their fleets of merchantmen and men-of-war sailed in every ocean, and no people was more prosperous. The artistic efflorescence of the 'Golden Age' was one of the most remarkable in all the history of painting. The degree of religious toleration which existed, though incomplete by modern standards, helped to demonstrate that uniformity of religious thought and practice was not essential to the coherence of the state, and that the ability to attract refugees from the intolerance of others could be a positive asset to national life. The contribution of the Dutch to the intellectual life of Europe is less obvious, but important nonetheless. In

many fields Dutch ideas and Dutch methods enjoyed the flattery of imitation – and that by some of the most progressive elements of European society. If the Dutch also had their share of jealousy and dislike from rivals, this too was in its way a tribute to their success.<sup>40</sup>

At the center of this “Golden Age” stood the city of Amsterdam, the home of the painter Rembrandt van Rijn and the poet Joost van den Vondel. The first is said to have had extensive contacts with, and been influenced in his religious thought by, the Mennonites;<sup>41</sup> the second was the son of Flemish Anabaptist parents.<sup>42</sup> Together, these two personalities symbolize the role Dutch Mennonites were beginning to play in this “Golden Age.” Their Prussian relatives, in contrast, though still in lively contact with this cultural center of Dutch civilization, lived nearly exclusively outside the urban centers of Elbing and Danzig where they played a peripheral role in a bit of a cultural backwater. Nor were they being integrated into the surrounding society, for their religious practices, if nothing else, excluded them from being accepted.

Because of the separation from their old homeland, the Mennonites in the Netherlands and Prussia underwent differing developments.<sup>43</sup> In the first instance, the growth of religious toleration in the Netherlands, beginning under William the Silent<sup>44</sup> and being in advance of any other country in the world, allowed Dutch Mennonites to play a much more prominent role in their society than did their co-religionists anywhere else. Over the long haul this had a liberalizing effect on their religious outlook.<sup>45</sup> They became a powerful and respected minority, so influential that they were able to persuade the Dutch government to intervene on behalf of their co-religionists in Prussia as well as elsewhere on a number of occasions.<sup>46</sup> Like their fellow countrymen, they were republican by choice and conviction in contrast to their more conservative and tradition-bound relatives in Prussia who, as we have seen, continued to place an inordinate faith and trust in autocratic rulers and the privileges they could still grant. The increasing cultural distance between the two groups is symbolized by the travails of a group of Prussian Mennonites that returned to the Netherlands in 1732 to resettle in their old homeland. Though assisted in every way by the Dutch Mennonites, the group never felt at home, nor did it establish itself economically, returning to Prussia within less than twenty years.<sup>47</sup> Not yet two hundred years after their departure from the Netherlands, Prussia seemed more home to them than their old motherland.

And yet, old ties of language and religion were maintained. That was about to change, however. By the end of the Seven Years’ War in 1763 Frederick the Great began to cast a longing eye on a moribund Polish kingdom ripe for dismemberment. In 1772 the First Partition of Poland

brought West Prussia, including the Vistula Delta region, under Prussian rule. But the opposition of Russia's Catherine II temporarily prevented Frederick from taking Danzig.<sup>48</sup> As both Peter Klassen and A. N. Ipatov have pointed out, the take-over by the Prussian crown of regions where Mennonites lived coincided with their linguistic transition from the Dutch to the German language. Undoubtedly, the Prussian government brought a different ethos to bear upon the annexed regions, an ethos that was Prussian and Germanic in nature rather than indifferent to race and ethnicity, as had been the case under the rule of the Polish kings. Although there is no study that links the Prussian annexation in any causal manner to the language transition among the Prussian Mennonites, the fact that the transition took place after the Seven Years' War and the first partition can hardly have been entirely, if at all, coincidental if at all. Already by 1768, the 1730 Dutch Prussian Mennonite confession of faith appeared in a German translation; the same was the case with their Dutch hymnbook. Though the editors of the latter argued in their introduction that they had been compelled to bring out a German translation because "Dutch Mennonites" in Prussia were losing access to their mother tongue, the growing Prussian influence in the region must have been at least of some consequence in this loss of access.

Linguistic accommodation did not mean, however, that Prussian Mennonites were happy about Frederick the Great's takeover, Benjamin Unruh notwithstanding. Almost immediately they began to feel the pressure of Prussian militarism upon their way of life; a pressure that was increased by Frederick the Great's successor, Frederick Wilhelm, in 1786. Military service, tied to land ownership in the Prussian state, began to complicate the life of the pacifistic Mennonites. At first they were able to buy their way out of such service, but under Frederick Wilhelm this was no longer possible, and so Mennonites came to be restricted in their acquisition of land. Such restrictions had not yet been a factor in 1763 when Catherine the Great issued her first manifesto inviting Prussian Mennonites among others to settle in "New Russia." Their non-response makes this apparent. However, when Von Trappe arrived in their midst in August, 1786 with a second invitation, they responded with some enthusiasm. As Von Trappe wrote to Prince Potemkin on 7 February, 1787:

... Even though the majority of Danzig's natives could count on the fact that their conditions could improve under Prussian control, yet for Danzig's Mennonites – according to the generally accepted conviction of the time – such a transfer of jurisdiction had, over a longer or shorter period of time, to be considered a 'fatal catastrophe.' They feared the military / police character of the Prussian state; they had good reason to be terrified of the 'Prussian yoke.' Their

co-religionists, who had come under Prussian control with the first partition of Poland, were soon subjected to restrictions in their freedoms.

In the year the first group of Prussian Mennonites left for Russia, the French Revolution broke out. By 1799 Napoleon had captured power in France and by 1803 he was on his way to subjugating Europe. In 1806 Prussia came under his control. In the wars of liberation that followed his 1812 defeat in Russia, national sentiment, as it had under similar circumstances earlier in the Netherlands in its war against Spain, was raised to a new level throughout Europe. The nation states that mobilized their armies to fight the French conqueror refused any longer to tolerate exemptions from military service; exemptions that had not even been mentioned in the many *Schutzbriefe* Mennonites had entered into with their rulers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This put heavy pressure on the Mennonites either to give up their nonresistance or leave the country. Mennonites in the Netherlands, the Palatinate, the Rhine region, Northern Germany, and eventually also Prussia in 1867, had their exemptions abolished altogether. In the seventeenth century Mennonites had bartered away their responsibility to propagate the faith; now their exemption from military service was unilaterally revoked. For those who accepted the new conditions, nothing any longer stood in the way of their being assimilated into the national cultures. As Peter Klassen has observed, "Centuries of pacifism ended as the powerful forces of Prussian nationalism and militarism, embodied in a dynamic culture, changed the character of Mennonite belief in this area. The Dutch Mennonites were being Prussianized."<sup>49</sup>

The Prussian Mennonites who left for Russia in 1789 and 1803/04, however, and less so the group that left in 1835 and settled in the colony of Gnadenfeld, escaped the process of acculturation and assimilation those who remained behind began to undergo. With the exception of their antipathy towards its militaristic character, they remained largely untouched by Prussian racial and national sentiment. To be sure, they were undergoing a language transition from Dutch to German, and many of them still had loose ties to the Netherlands, but neither of these were critical factors in their self-consciousness. They were motivated by the desire to acquire land for an expanding population unencumbered by military service. If we are to believe Mannhardt, it was the church leaders rather than the rank and file members who still clung to the old dogma of nonresistance.

Thus, by the time Prussian Mennonites left for Russia in the late eighteenth-early nineteenth centuries, their religion had long since ceased to be the dynamic faith of the early Anabaptists; they had will-



ingly exchanged the Christian obligation "to preach the gospel to all creatures" for a limited religious toleration; they had bowed to the dominant state religion's demand to remain inconspicuous and unobtrusive; they had exchanged the Dutch language for the German, though their use of the Low German in everyday discourse appears to have remained a constant; and the energy they had initially invested in the defense of their religion had been transferred to the secular world of land reclamation, agriculture, trade and commerce. They had become "the quiet in the land" religiously; economically, however, they were anything but quiet. And yet, through it all, they had clung to their traditional non-resistant principles, becoming an ethno-religious group, twice uprooted from its surrounding culture, in which inherited religious practices had become so much a part of their *Eigenart*, their way of life, that they could hardly be separated from it. The heroic days of their fathers' Reformation faith was only a vague and distant memory, though their sense of being persecuted, of being martyred, had stayed with them. It was rekindled by the economic hardships they were beginning to suffer because of their pacifism. This perception alone was enough to confirm them in the God-pleasing nature of their *Eigenart*.<sup>50</sup>

For these Prussian/Russian Mennonites life had to be lived, not contemplated.<sup>51</sup> They had been excluded from the world of higher education since their inception in the age of the Reformation. They lived in a world ignorant of history, a world that had largely forgotten Menno Simons. They therefore lacked the reflective capacity to analyze the process of transformation they were undergoing.<sup>52</sup> Even those left behind in Prussia, when confronted with the definitive loss of their military exemption in 1863, had to hire a relative outsider to write the history of their own adherence to the principle of nonresistance. Little wonder that they entered Russia in 1789 without so much as a murmur of protest against the government's prohibition to proselytize among the Orthodox and were quite content to allow themselves to be settled in closed communities where their *Eigenart* – their increasingly idiosyncratic way of life – could develop unhindered by government or surrounding culture. Except for the periodic influx of co-religionists, especially the 1835 group of Pietistic Lutheran Mennonites that settled in Gnadenfeld, and the occasional teachers from Prussia, they remained nearly totally isolated; so isolated and self-sufficient, in fact, that they began to speak of themselves as a *Völklein*: a nearly independent people. Yet they appear to have given little thought to this *Völklein's* race or ethnicity.

Into this isolated world of the Russian Mennonite *Völklein* came two events that were to prove of critical importance prior to the military exemption crisis of 1873/74 both for their internal development and

their external relations: the coming of the Pietistic Lutheran Mennonites from Prussia to Gnadenfeld in 1835, and the emergence of the MB Church in 1860. The two were not unrelated, for the sources of spiritual renewal amongst the Russian Mennonites in the late 1850s that produced the MB Church were Pietistic in origin and centered in Gnadenfeld.

When the 1835 Mennonite migration left Prussia, a Lutheran congregation strongly influenced by Pietism joined the exodus to Russia and became Mennonite. From what transpired later, it is clear that these "Lutheran Mennonites" brought an interest in higher education and strong ties to German Pietism with them. For, beginning in the late 1850s when young men from Gnadenfeld began to seek a higher theological education, the Gnadenfeld elders, from Lenzmann on, encouraged virtually all of them to study at the Barmen *Missionsschule* under the direction of Dr. Friedrich Fabri. The latter was himself the product of Württemberg Pietism and an admirer of Johann Christoph Blumhart, founder of the Pietistic Basel *Missionsschule* and correspondent of a number of the Danzig van der Smisens. From Heinrich Dirks Sr. onward, students from the Old Mennonite Church received their theological education from Friedrich Fabri and his fellow Pietist teachers at Barmen. This would not have happened had not Lenzmann, or someone else, brought these ties with them when they arrived in Russia in 1835, ties that were made explicit in the Gnadenfeld teaching regarding the nature of the church at the time of the MB schism. In the ensuing conflict, it was Lenzmann, as we have seen, who responded to the secessionists' demand for a "pure" church with the Lutheran interpretation of the church as a "mixed" body consisting of wheat and tares, while at the same time promoting a Pietistic version of spiritual renewal or conversion. It was under the auspices of such a Pietistic background that Eduard Wüst, also a Lutheran Pietist from Württemberg, came to Gnadenfeld to sow the seeds of revival. The soil upon which Wüst's Pietistic seed fell may therefore well have been white unto harvest, but the grain that ripened was not Anabaptist in character.

It would be interesting and profitable to compare the Pietistic interpretation of conversion with that of the early Anabaptists at this juncture, but it would take us too far afield. Suffice it to say, some of those Gnadenfeld members who were brought to a spiritual awakening under Wüst's ministry did not adopt the Lutheran Pietistic view of the church in which wheat and tares were tolerated side by side.<sup>53</sup> Instead, perhaps because of Wüst's own preference for a "pure" church, they turned to the nearly forgotten Menno Simons who had propounded the Anabaptist vision of a believer's church, a church that sought to exclude the tares by means of baptism upon the confession of a personally experi-

enced faith. But then, under the primary influence of the German Baptists, the secessionists adopted immersion baptism as the only true Christian *form* of baptism.<sup>54</sup> As we have seen, this led to nearly endless debates amongst Russian Mennonites and even government officials about whether Mennonite Brethren were Baptists or Anabaptists. The debates themselves indicate, perhaps more clearly than anything else, that the religious identity of the Russian Mennonites had shifted over the years. The Old Mennonites had become Lutheran in their ecclesiology and, at least to a considerable extent, traditional in their Mennonite practice of religion, demanding that everyone wishing to marry be catechized and baptized upon a learned and not necessarily experienced faith. Their MB rivals to orthodox Mennonitism had meanwhile become at least partially Pietistic in their conversion theology, Baptist in their form of baptism, and Anabaptist in their ecclesiology. But no matter on which side of the divide one stood, no one really had much knowledge or understanding of the original essence of Anabaptist/Mennonite faith and practice. The Russian Mennonites' later enthusiastic adoption of Keller's interpretation makes the point. Lacking such a foundation in their own history and theology, both parties came to be manipulated by historical forces they had no critical way of evaluating. Both could therefore claim to be fully "Mennonite" while adhering to non-Mennonite articles of faith and practice.

Not only did these events demonstrate the growing impact of outside influences on the Russian Mennonite *Völklein*, they also led it to establish ties with the wider Protestant world in Germany. MBs, with their ties to the German Baptists, sent their theology students to the Baptist seminary in Hamburg; Old Mennonites sent theirs to the Barmen and Basel missionary schools.<sup>55</sup> In so doing, both groups began, from the 1870s on, to make contact with the wider world of German learning through non-threatening religious groups, most of them influenced in one fashion or another by Pietism with its "Allianz" leanings and European-wide connections.<sup>56</sup> This Alliance Movement, centered in Basel, radiated out into the European world, establishing contacts with like-minded groups in England, America, Germany, and even Russia, contacts that led men like P. M. Friesen to seek to build an alliance movement within the Russian Mennonite community to bridge the gap created by the 1860 schism as well as to reach out to like-minded Russian evangelicals. With such contacts established, it was natural for Russian Mennonites later on to send their sons to German and Swiss universities.

The disputed Russian Mennonite religious identity that arose out of the 1860 schism came to be challenged from another direction, first of all by Inspector Tscherniaevsky's report on the new MB "sect," and

then, only a few years later, by Alexander Klaus' interpretation of Mennonite origins. The former equated the new group with Münsterite fanaticism, an association that may well have led to their being denounced as "Jumpers" (Klysty), a debauched sect of the Orthodox Church Rasputin is reported to have belonged to. Klaus' charge was the more troublesome, however, for he revived the old theory of the revolutionary origins, not only of the MBs, but of Reformation Anabaptism/Mennonitism generally. As such it affected all Russian Mennonites. Nor did it mollify the latter that Klaus appears to have intended his interpretation as a compliment, for it awakened in them that old ambivalence they had always secretly felt about their past and the fear that there might be some truth to the ancient charge after all. At the same time, governmental acceptance of Klaus' interpretation could easily undermine their military exempt status. Better to hush it up than to respond to it, to play the quiet in the land here too.

The Russian Mennonites' dismay at these charges is readily discerned in David H. Epp's response to Ludwig Keller's studies, studies introduced to the Russian Mennonite community at a critical point in its historical awakening and educational explosion. For those studies enabled the Russian Mennonites to refute both Tscherniavsky's and Klaus' interpretations. Furthermore, Keller's interpretation could also be used to explain who they were to the Russian government, explanations for which the Russian Mennonites, including Peter Braun, repeatedly employed the title: "Who are the [Russian] Mennonites?" As they sought to explain who they were to the government – and their explanation had a distinct political edge to it – the Russian Mennonites also began to define who they were to themselves. By a fortuitous or fateful coincidence (depending upon the reader's perspective), they discovered Keller's seriously flawed interpretation<sup>57</sup> just as their problems with the government and their search for identity began. Keller assisted them in both these endeavors. As we have seen, he helped in at least three ways in their emerging quarrels with the government: first, with regard to their exemption from military service which the government had been trying to rescind since 1873; second, in their quarrel with the government over its attempt to label Mennonites a sect; and, thirdly, in the government's attempt to liquidate their land. The role Keller played in helping the Russian Mennonites discover their own identity is less apparent.

It was during the years we have been studying, then, that the Russian Mennonites first began consciously to reflect on who they really were. In 1897 David H. Epp published the discoveries he had gleaned on the subject from the writings of Ludwig Keller in an addendum on Mennonite origins attached to his catechism. In November of the same

year H. J. Braun wrote Keller himself, declaring that he hoped "to learn as much as possible about the historical origins of the Mennonites" while in Germany, and asked for copies of Keller's studies. In 1902, P. M. Friesen wrote a confession of faith for the MB Church based upon earlier Anabaptist/Mennonite confessions, a confession that recovered, perhaps accidentally, the heart of Anabaptist theology in its article on baptism. He had already been working on a history of the Russian Mennonite "brotherhood" for nearly twenty years. Though perhaps less directly Friesen was also in search of Mennonite origins and Mennonite identity. Many things appear to have stimulated this quest: the conflict, as religious conflicts often do, engendered by the schism of 1860; the revival of the old accusation of a revolutionary Anabaptist past; the conflict over whether MBs were Mennonites or Baptists; the conflict with the Russian government over Russification; the Boer War of 1899-1902; and the gradual awakening historical consciousness among them. This search for identity was essentially a spiritual quest, and Keller, as he had done a decade-and-a-half earlier for Mennonites in Germany, provided the Russian Mennonites with an answer.

But while the Russian Mennonites' spiritual and political eyes came to be fixed on Keller's histories, the Russian government's attempt to assimilate them into Russian society awakened their sense of national or racial identity. Because of the nearly simultaneous Boer War, their search for racial identity came to be fixed on South Africa and the Boers. Had they not like the latter, in whom they discovered their long lost brothers, also left their Old Dutch homeland in search of religious freedom? They therefore followed the vicissitudes of the Boer War with keen interest, named many a Russian Mennonite village "Pretoria," and were awakened to a racial identity half forgotten and never consciously articulated. As Peter Braun observed in his *Kto takie Mennonity*:

It should not be assumed that the Russian Mennonites have only now [during WWI] been reminded of their Dutch origin. It is true they never paid much attention to it, nor was there any need to do so; but this awareness has always been there and surfaced from time to time. For example, during the Boer War in South Africa (1899-1902), Mennonites often spoke of their Dutch origin and their kinship with the Boers. At times they even liked to call themselves "Boers" (in the vernacular, "Buren" means "Bauer" or farmer), and they followed the course of military affairs in South Africa with the greatest of interest.

Braun proceeded to point out that Russian Mennonites supported the Doopsgezinde missions program and sent their missionaries, who served under it, for study to the Netherlands.<sup>58</sup>

Russian Mennonites confirmed this awakening sense of their Dutch racial identity in one other way: in how they treated Keller's interpre-

tation of Anabaptism to which they seemed so solidly wed. From David H. Epp onward, not one of them gave even a passing thought of adopting Keller's *Germanic* Anabaptist hero, Hans Denck, as their own,<sup>59</sup> though they must have realized that Denck, not Menno, was the lynchpin of Keller's larger historical argument. Instead, they consciously and conspicuously removed Denck from the center of Keller's scheme and inserted Menno Simons in his place. This was as much a theological as a racial choice, for Keller had selected Denck for the honor because of his mystical theology and because he wished to influence German Mennonites. All Russian Mennonites, old and new, were agreed, however, that the Frisian (if not Dutchman) was their spiritual progenitor; their line of descent came from the followers of Menno who had lived in the Netherlands. Russian Mennonites were therefore no slaves to Keller; they took what they wanted or needed, and quietly ignored the rest. What suited their purpose from Keller's interpretation was his "Waldensian argument" which freed Menno from the Münsterites, and his argument that Mennonites were an integral part of that great "apostolic succession" that could trace its lineage all the way back to the apostolic church, for this not only freed them from any sectarian character but also established them as the "one true church." In this latter sense, Keller's interpretation appears to have confirmed theologically what they had already begun to think about themselves ethnically as a *Völklein*.

And yet these Russian Mennonites, who were in the process of discovering their Dutch roots, no longer spoke the Dutch language or had any meaningful contact with their old motherland. They were made only too painfully aware of this by representatives of the Russian government when, at the outset of the war, they tried to avoid the consequences of the land liquidation law by arguing that they were of Dutch descent while at the same time complaining of having the German language proscribed in their communities. If they were really Dutch, these officials argued, Mennonites should simply switch to the Dutch language in their church services, publications, and other public discourse. Were they really Dutch, this should not be an insurmountable problem. But, alas, the Russian Mennonites knew no Dutch though they sought to make their Low German serve in its place. For all intents and purposes, said the Russian officials, they had become cultural Germans and should therefore be treated as such. Benjamin Unruh agreed.

Perhaps the Mennonites had not yet become cultural Germans when they entered Russia in the late eighteenth century; perhaps they were not yet cultural Germans as late as the 1890s. But by the time of World War I, this too was changing. As early as the 1870s they had begun to send their theological students to Germany: to Barmen, to Basel and to

the Baptist seminary in Hamburg. By the 1890s their sons (and the occasional daughter) were beginning to attend German universities, and coming back with doctorates. Even the students in their Russian schools were being taught in the German language and their school textbooks, until the 1880s, were purchased from Germany. They read German newspapers, books,<sup>60</sup> periodicals and other materials. As tabulated by Russian officials and confirmed by Peter Braun, the mail traffic between Russian Mennonites and Germany increased dramatically in the years just prior to the war. Even for Mennonites educated in Russian institutions of higher learning like Peter Braun, German culture and learning were clearly more attractive and superior to that of Russia. It was, as Braun himself remarked, that unforgettable German book that had captivated them.

Despite the above, the war with Germany and the subsequent land liquidation crisis "forced" the Mennonites, as Peter Braun the younger wrote in 1965, to reclaim their Dutch ancestry with a vengeance; to assert that they "were really sons and daughters of the Netherlands." Perhaps racially, though no longer linguistically, ethnically, or culturally. As Loder, the Dutch Mennonite, told Benjamin Unruh in 1920: "Your Great Grandfather was a Hollander; but that was a little long ago. You don't speak Dutch; that your dialect is permeated with elements of the Dutch language proves your Dutch ancestry, but you are a citizen of the Ukraine." Unlike the Boers, Loder observed, Russian Mennonites had not remained completely Dutch. Was their "Dutch argument" therefore a mere matter of convenience, a way of escaping the consequences of being "German" in World War I Russia? Certainly to a large extent, though perhaps not entirely. For already the Boer War had, as Peter J. Braun noted, "reminded them of their Dutch origins."

We have seen the extent to which Russian Mennonites employed the "Dutch argument" during the years of crisis. They used it at the very outset of the war to attempt to deflect the anti-German attacks of ardent Russian nationalists from themselves. It was the centerpiece of virtually every official and unofficial petition to the government dealing with conscription as well as the liquidation of their lands. And in the end it appeared to have been crowned with success. Nevertheless, the arrival of German troops in 1918 changed everything. Suddenly their racial identity came into conflict with who they had become linguistically and, to an extent, culturally, though perhaps not ethnically. Language and culture won over race and ethnicity, and the Ukrainian Mennonites, at least in considerable numbers, identified with Germany and her troops. Even Peter J. Braun, the author of the "Dutch argument," did so; and he was persuaded that many others had done so as well. That was why, already in his June, 1917 *Gesichtspunkte* for the collec-

tion of archival materials, he wanted to discover how widespread this "awakening of a German national consciousness [among the Ukrainian Mennonites] was at the beginning of the revolution." It was a consciousness that led the Ukrainian Mennonites to investigate the possibilities of "repatriation" to Germany and to toy with the idea of supporting the creation of a dependent German state in the Black Sea region. Siberian Mennonites, however, remained untouched by all this, at least for the moment. But under Benjamin Unruh's tutelage this also changed, at least for those Siberian Mennonites who managed to escape Russia with Germany's help in 1929/1930 via Moscow. As Peter J. Braun wrote in April 1922: "Gradually, under these circumstances, it became ever more apparent to us whose *intellectual and cultural* [he uses the term *Geistes*, but not in its spiritual sense] children we were, where we really belonged, for whom our hearts beat." This Mennonite association with *das Deutschtum* as an intellectual, linguistic and cultural construct, was made all the easier for those who embarked upon this path by rejecting their nonresistance and ultimately settling in Germany where many, though not all of them, had previously studied.

For the Russian Mennonites, then, the war and post-war period produced all the earmarks of a crisis of identity. Fostered by the perceived disloyalty of the Russian government and the virulent hatred of the surrounding populace on the one hand, and their apparent rapport with and assistance of the German troops on the other, Ukrainian Mennonites temporarily rejected their Dutch origins and either ignored or submerged their ethnic differences, identifying themselves as Germans. Identification led to a fraternization so intimate that, according to a number of reports, many a Mennonite maiden lost her virginity to a German soldier and many a Mennonite youth was seduced by the German military into the *Selbstschutz*. For a moment in time it seemed that the rift between race, on the one hand, and language and culture, on the other, had been bridged, but at the cost of racial denial. But it was only for a moment, for with the collapse of the German empire it once more became convenient for the Ukrainian Mennonites to be of Dutch origin.

As we have seen, the denial of their Dutch racial origins coincided with the rejection by a considerable number of these Mennonites of their non-resistant principles, principles that had characterized their way of life since the time of Menno. It was a way of life they had confirmed in their early conflict with the "apocalyptic vengeful types" in their midst. They had fought to retain it when Frederick the Great conquered the part of Poland they lived in. They left for Russia when the struggle seemed to go against them, and they subsequently referred to "Prussian militarism" with some bitterness. In 1873/74 they success-



fully resisted the Russian government's attempt to impose universal conscription upon them; they did so again during World War I. But in the chaotic and revolutionary aftermath of the war, and under the influence of the very German military they had reviled only a few years earlier, many finally allowed the feelings of hatred that had welled up within them to get the better of them and sought not only to defend themselves, their families, and their property, but to disarm entire Ukrainian villages, to reassert their rights to lands confiscated from them during and after the war, and forcibly retrieve stolen property at the end of a gun barrel. In one fleeting moment they sacrificed the one aspect of their Reformation heritage they had struggled so long to retain, not in defense of the Fatherland or the greater good of the Russian people, but for personal and material reasons.<sup>61</sup> This temporary lapse led to more than a *Selbstschutz* – a mere self defense; it led to an aggressive attempt to recover, under the protection of the German army, what had been taken from them during and after the war. Such actions were short-sighted in the extreme, for theirs was an impossible situation, a situation that became all too clear to them when the German troops left. In their wake, the Russian people and the Communist government imposed a much greater suffering upon them than they could ever have imagined. Departing from Christ's way of peace had not obviated their suffering.

The suffering Russian Mennonites experienced between 1917 and 1924 was, however, merely a prelude to what was to come under Stalin in the 1930s. Whereas they had, as the result of the violent actions of a minority within their ranks, brought the earlier suffering largely upon themselves, the later suffering became a real martyrdom for the faith, as it had been in the Netherlands after 1536. Yet it was fraught with the same doubts that had plagued the Dutch Mennonites earlier. Were they being persecuted for the sake of Christ or for their own misdeeds committed during the war and the *Selbstschutz*? Russian Communists as well as others argued that the fault was their own: their identification with the German military in 1918 had undermined their "Dutch argument," and the *Selbstschutz* had destroyed their claims to be a people of peace. They were not suffering for the sake of Christ; their suffering was the direct consequence of their own actions.

Not an unalloyed martyrdom, then; nor did the Russian Mennonites possess an unadulterated Anabaptist faith, even in the one they had so recently recovered via Ludwig Keller. Though they still clung to some traditional vestiges of their Anabaptist heritage, they had largely forgotten it and Menno long before they encountered Keller. The 1860 revival had, to a degree, refocused attention upon Menno, but their real recovery of what they thought Anabaptism was came by way of Keller.

The latter had pursued his own agenda in his interpretation, however; and the Russian Mennonites who recovered him honored him by using his studies in the same way. In doing so they came to be more solidly wedded to certain aspects of that interpretation than anyone has realized. Most of what they acquired from him would later, on the basis of more trustworthy scholarship, have to be unlearned, but only in the new world. Thus, though they identified themselves religiously as Mennonites, even this aspect of their identity had no secure or firm markers. What these Ukrainian Mennonites then possessed when they left the old country in the 1920s was, besides the residual animosities stemming from 1860, an internal conflict coupled with guilt over the *Selbstschutz*; a largely suppressed hatred of the anarchists, communists and their Jewish theoreticians; a racial and cultural identity that changed with the changing political landscape; and a largely misunderstood Anabaptist heritage.

Their identity crisis occurred virtually on the eve of the Russian Mennonite migration to Canada during the 1920s; there it came to be exacerbated by the transition to the English language and Anglo/Canadian culture just before and during World War II where everything German, once again, came under attack. The latter transition, coupled with their identity crisis, might have had a greater impact upon the Russian Mennonites had not their ethnicity remained constant, an ethnicity they themselves alluded to periodically under the term *Völklein*. The term indicated their awareness that they were different from the ethnic Germans, even those in Russia, and perhaps also even from the Dutch whose racial ancestors they claimed to be. It was an ethnicity built to a certain extent around the one constant element in their history since the time of their migration to the Vistula Delta: their Low German language. It is a language many descendants of the Russian Mennonites use in every-day discourse to this very day. Where and when they acquired it has never been definitively established, but current scholarship regards it as a separate language related to Anglo-Saxon English and Dutch/Flemish. It is a language that has set the Russian Mennonites even more apart from the rest of human society than their Anabaptist/Mennonite faith. It separated them from their German neighbors in Poland/Prussia; it served the same function in Russia. It is still used extensively by the descendants of Russian Mennonites in South America, Mexico, and to a lesser extent in the United States and Canada. Their ethnic traits have developed around the use of this largely non-literary language, traits they have retained in the new world despite the loss of the Dutch and German languages. These ethnic characteristics lie at the core of what B. B. Janz referred to as the Mennonite *Eigenart*: their idiosyncrasies as a *Völklein*.

Whether consciously or otherwise, it was this Mennonite ethnicity Benjamin Unruh sought to undermine with his argument that the Dutch/Low German language Russian Mennonites originally spoke was really only an offshoot of the German language, and that the *Völklein* they claimed to belong to was merely a part of the German *Volk*. Since that was the case, he believed Russian Mennonites should be reintegrated into his beloved *Deutschtum* and the German *Volk*. His attempt to accomplish this met with some success amongst those Siberian Mennonites who escaped to Germany via Moscow, and then to South America in 1929/1930. But only amongst those Russian Mennonites who settled in Germany between the wars, and those who returned to Germany from South America, has *das Deutschtum* swallowed up the Russian Mennonite *Eigenart*. It is an *Eigenart* that differentiates to this day, and no matter in which country they have settled, a Russian Mennonite from his or her Dutch, German, or Swiss religious counterpart. Even the latter, depending upon when they departed their Russian homeland, manifest different ethnic characteristics. Thus the Mennonites who left Russia for North America after the 1873/1874 conscription crisis, known in Canada as the *Kanadier*, differ from those who came out during the 1920s and are known as the *Russländer*. The same holds true for those who came out during World War II, and those who have come out since the 1970s. To a greater or lesser degree all of these have been affected by the intervening events in Russia, the times during which they emigrated, and the countries in which they ultimately settled. Until relatively recently the Low German language and their Mennonite faith – since 1860 increasingly less uniform – still tied them together. But aside from some more isolated and conservative groups, the Low German language, once the common coin of the Russian Mennonite *Völklein*, will soon have faded into memory.

It is little wonder, then, that many of those who were the Canadian sons and daughters of these Russian Mennonite refugees, growing up in yet another period and another country where they were regarded as German enemies during World War II (though not to the extent as had been the case in Russia), experienced their own identity crisis and eventually asked the same question: who *are* the Russian Mennonites? In many ways the most important aspect of their search has been the return to a study of the early years of the Anabaptist movement in both Zurich and the Netherlands. Here the relationship between Thomas Müntzer and the Swiss Brethren had once more to be clarified, as had the relationship between Menno and Münster. Only this time it had to be done in *Auseinandersetzung* with the Bender school's interpretation as well as that of its vaunted nemesis, the Post Modernist "Polygenesis" school. The intellectual roots of the movements had to be uncovered

in order to separate its various branches and be able to understand the interplay between them. Linguistic studies, especially of the Low German language, had to be pursued, and the *Dutch* racial origins of the Northern wing uncovered. Not because race is determinative in any sense, but simply because that is who we are. For in spite of being absent from the place of our origin for 450 years, at least some of us, like A. A. Friesen, feel more at home in the Netherlands than in Germany when we return to the old country, and this in spite of having lived in Germany for over three years at various times. To know where one belongs racially, religiously, and linguistically, and in the case of the Russian Mennonites with respect to their Low German language, satisfies the human quest for identity, for belonging. Ethnicity and culture may come and go – and in North America they will most certainly eventually go – but race and religion remain, though the latter may also change with assimilation. That being the case, if the Anabaptist faith was worth sacrificing one's life for in the sixteenth century, it should certainly be worth our while to attempt to recover it in its pristine purity in the twentieth century. Perhaps, as we are assimilated into the Canadian, American, or any other dominant culture, we should seek to separate even our race from the faith as it was in the earliest years of the movement; not the faith of our fathers, but of the first progenitors of the faith as they themselves unconsciously did. We, however, must now do so consciously.

# Endnotes

## CHAPTER 1

1. On Menno and the early Dutch Anabaptist movement, see Abraham Friesen, "Present at the Inception: Menno Simons and the Beginnings of Dutch Anabaptism," *MQR* (July, 1998): 351-388.
2. Though this was the title Russian rulers had arrogated to themselves, their Mennonite subjects referred to them as "the most gracious Tsar!" See Peter Braun, "Einige Gedanken zur Auswanderungsfrage" where the latter states: "The conditions under which we lived [in Russia] contributed to the fact that we, well into the present time, were nearly completely isolated from the essential realities of Russia, and, to speak with P. M. Friesen, knew and treasured only three things: the good land, the cheap labor, and the gracious Tsar, the giver of the great Privilegium." John B. Toews, ed., *Selected Documents: The Mennonites in Russia from 1917 to 1930* (Winnipeg: The Christian Press, 1975): 301.
3. On Alba, see Henry Kamen, *The Duke of Alba* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).
4. Perhaps nowhere more vehemently and explicitly expressed than in Martin Klaassen's *Geschichte der wehrlosen Taufgesinnten Gemeinden von den Zeiten der Apostel bis auf die Gegenwart* (Danzig: Edwin Groening, 1873). Here, in the closing pages, Klaassen even exempted the Russian rulers from any responsibility for undermining those privileges during the 1870s, saying: "If then the hour of our trial now appears to want to descend upon us so suddenly, or is already upon us, this has nothing whatever to do with the perhaps arbitrary will of a ruling authority, but is rather the express result of the will of a wise and gracious God who employs the general laws of a completely just government especially favorably inclined toward us to test our faith . . . [because we] are as yet far from worthy of entering the kingdom of God. O how many years, indeed already decades have we 'rested,' secure and without concern, 'on our *privilegium*,' trusting it completely as an armor and sanctuary on the assumption that it would protect us in all eventualities and for all time, and that no power would dare to attack it." Pp. 299-300. See also Cornelius Bergmann, "Die Lage der Mennoniten in Russland," *MBI*, #2 (February, 1915): 11. Contrast this with the statement of a Pier Paolo Vergerio, a fifteenth-century Florentine Civic Humanist who stated on one occasion: "For just as the name of cruelty is hateful in a free commonwealth, so is the name of clemency – because we would not get accustomed to calling a man 'full of clemency' if he could not also be cruel with impunity."
5. The Gospel of Luke: 16: 1-15.
6. On the history of the Mennonite privileges, especially in Poland, see, aside from Wilhelm Mannhardt, *Die Wehrfreiheit der Altpreuussischen Mennoniten: Eine Geschichtliche Erörterung* (Marienburg, 1863), Felicia Szper, *Nederlandische Neder-zettingen in West-Pruisen Gedurende den Poolschen Tijd* (Enkhuizen: P. Bais, 1913); and D. H. Epp, *Bausteine zur Geschichte der Mennoniten in S. Russland*, manuscript in the possession of the MLA.
7. As Wilhelm Mannhardt put it in his classic *Die Wehrfreiheit*: 1: "Only in one point did, and do they [the Mennonites] demand an exception for themselves. They declare that they are unable to comply with [the state's] call to defend their fatherland with the weapons of war since to do so would put them in conflict with God's command not to kill one's fellow man. They declare nonresistance to be a fundamental article of their faith."
8. Monastic rules, such as the Rule of St. Benedict, proclaiming Christ's "Counsels of

- Perfection," did the same. See my "Anabaptism and Monasticism: A Study in the Development of Parallel Historical Patterns," *JMS*, vol. 6 (1988): 174-197.
9. This transition in the Mennonite relationship from an "autocratic" to a "constitutional" ruler and its impact on their exemption is clearly reflected in a passage in Martin Klaassen's *Wehrlose Taufgesinnte*: 275-276, where the author wrote: "King Frederick William IV, who was perhaps granted a greater measure of understanding toward and recognition of the Mennonites' value to the kingdom than his forebears, gave the following answer to a Mennonite petition – made on the occasion when their delegation, in the persons of Elders Peter Froese and Peter Regehr, paid homage [to the king] in Berlin on 10 December, 1840 – to continue to be granted religious freedom: 'I gladly accept the good wishes expressed by the deputies in the name of the Mennonite congregations in their latest petition of this month, and I will continue to grant them, undiminished, the protection they have enjoyed under my exalted forefathers.' This was the last word spoken [by the monarch] from a position of absolute royal power; but the congregations failed to realize that it would grant them only a brief period of grace. For the king himself, who had just stated 'that no power on earth would ever force him to concede that a written piece of paper (a constitution) would come between him and his people like a second providence,' had, a few years later, to bow his crowned head to the forces of change and withdraw the words spoken only eleven months earlier before the gathered representatives of the land, sacrificing his word to the scorn and mockery of the majority of a people that had risen in revolt against him."
  10. Dr. W. Mannhardt, "Zur Wehrfrage," *MBI*, #9 (December, 1868): 74-76; #1 (January, 1869): 5-8; #2 (February, 1869): 12-15; #4 (May, 1869): 31-34; #5 (June, 1869): 37-41, 48-50; #6 (July, 1869): 3-4.
  11. *Ibid*: #9 (December, 1868): 74.
  12. A particularly interesting example of this is the city of Danzig itself where, in its environs, many Dutch Mennonites settled in the late first and second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Toward the end of his long career as a syndic of the city, Gottfried Lengnich (1689-1774), in 1769, completed a study of Danzig's laws and privileges entitled *Jus Publicum Civitatis Gedanensis*. But the city council thought it the better part of wisdom not to publish the text and risk irritating the city's overlord, the King of Poland. Not until 1900 was it published. See the introduction to the published study by Otto Guenther, hrsg., *Des Syndicus der Stadt Danzig Gottfried Lengnich Jus Publicum Civitatis Gedanensis oder der Stadt Danzig Verfassung und Rechte* (Danzig: Th. Bertling, 1900): XV-XVI.
  13. Even "Mennonites" in East Friesland were able to negotiate such agreements with their overlords beginning with the 1626 *Schutzbrief* (letter of protection) of Count Christian Rudolf upon payment of sizeable sums of money and the following conditions, according to J. P. Müller's *Die Mennoniten in Ostfriesland vom 16. Bis zum 18. Jahrhundert* (Amsterdam: Johannes Müller, 1887): 40: "Included are the preconditions upon which the government granted the *Schutzbrief* (peaceful and unobtrusive behavior, secret and quiet practice of their religion, avoidance of every form of religious proselytism) and the command expressly directed to all and sundry of the duchy's officials concerning it . . . ." This document, similar to a few earlier ones, became exemplary for all such later agreements, which could – and did – change with the whim of the ruler, placing more or less restrictions upon the Mennonites. This was toleration at a price where all the negotiating advantages lay with those in power. The various agreements between the rulers of East Friesland and their Mennonite subjects are discussed at length in Müller's study.

14. See also Loewen and Urry's observation: "These statements clearly reflect how far by 1907 Mennonites had aligned themselves with the Russian state and an autocratic Tsarist regime which protected not just their lives, but also their property and privileges." Helmut-Harry Loewen & James Urry, "Protecting Mammon: Some Dilemmas of Mennonite Nonresistance in late Imperial Russia and the Origins of the Selbstschutz," *JMS*, vol. 9, 1991: 43.
15. Once again, nowhere is this more apparent than in the pages of Martin Klaassen's history. Blaming virtually everything on the "spirit" of the French Revolution, Klaassen wrote: "The French Revolution of 1789 was the brief but nevertheless sufficiently gruesome prelude to the opening act of the future. From that day to this, the governments of the Christian West have been enmeshed in a severe though mostly futile internal struggle to maintain their states in the midst of crumbling foundations. They are giving ground step by step to the evermore audacious and impudent forces that are rising from the sinister abyss, sacrificing one power after another no matter whether of a purely divine or more human origin." Klaassen, *Wehrlose Taufgesinnte*: 270-279. A few pages later Klaassen observed: "It was apparent that the people would have liked to help, but the king and his nobles could not, since the constitution – that 'written piece of paper, this second providence between a king and his people' as Fredrick William IV significantly called it on 11 April, 1847 – spoke the decisive word in the land," p. 283. Did the majority of the Russian Mennonites share this view of a constitutional monarchy?
16. David H. Epp, in his 1916 manuscript, *Bausteine*, indicates that not all Mennonites were absolutely sanguine about the "eternal" nature of their privileges. There he wrote: "This Privilegium solemnly renewed the rights the Mennonites of the Werder had enjoyed thus far and also freed them for ever from the payment of every extraordinary tax. Only eight years later, however, the king had to issue another royal decree in this regard. In it John Casimir repeatedly confirmed the continued and uninterrupted possession of their old customs," p. 23. I am grateful to John Thiesen, archivist of the MLA, for providing me with a copy.
17. From the German translation of 1887 by the Mennonite, Jacob Toews, of Odessa: A. Klaus, *Unsere Kolonien. Studien und Materialien zur Geschichte und Statistik der ausländischen Kolonisten in Russland* (Odessa, 1887): 131. Indeed, in his introduction (p. 9), Klaus appeared to argue that such "eternal privileges" were no longer necessary.
18. Klaassen, *Wehrlose Taufgesinnte*: 274. In January and February, 1911, the *FrSt* published, under the title: "Reiseberichte und Bittschriften in Angelegenheit der Wehrlosigkeit in Russland in den siebziger Jahren des vorigen Jahrhunderts," a chronicle of the Mennonite delegates' trip to St. Petersburg in November and December, 1873. Justifying the new universal military conscription law of 1873, the Minister, Valuev, said to them: "The laws of a state are as changeable as the seasons. This is true not only in Russia but also in other countries like Germany and Sweden, where such changes are commonplace. . . ." He repeated this on several other occasions, noting in one of them: "Quite frankly . . . you [Mennonites] cannot escape unscathed from such changes when all others in every European country have to fulfill their civic obligations, *even your fellow believers*, if perhaps under other circumstances . . . [my emphasis]." Heinrich Epp, "Reisebericht und Bittschriften," *FrSt*, vol. IX, No. 11 (9 February, 1911): 5.
19. St. Petersburg documents on microfilm held in the Center for MB Studies and Archives, Fresno Pacific University: CSHAofR, Fond No. 383, Opus 28, Dielo No. 439, Document #3.

20. *Ibid*: Document #6.
21. *Ibid*: Document # 11.
22. *Ibid*: see Document # 15, Ministry of Internal Affairs to Elders of 57 Mennonite colonies.
23. Klaus, *Unsere Kolonien*: The same was true of the Mennonites in Prussia, as Wilhelm and Jakob Mannhardt both pointed out in justification of their argument in favor of giving up their nonresistance.
24. "... We warn everyone who would seek to circumvent the strict consequences of our laws, however, not to attempt to induce or mislead any Christian fellow believer living in Russia to join his faith or church." As quoted by P. J. Braun in a letter to J. H. Janzen of 25 February, 1927: *Peter J. Braun Correspondence*.
25. *Ibid*: By this time, apparently, such a prohibition did not pose a problem for the Mennonites since they had begun to accommodate themselves to similar restrictions at least as early as 1626 in East Friesland.
26. Sergei I. Zhuk, *Russia's Lost Reformation: Peasants, Millenialism, and Radical Sects in Southern Russia and Ukraine, 1830-1917* (Washington & Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center Press & The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004): 33-52, however, argues that there was considerable interaction between the various groups in this "frontier" region at least during the early settlement years.
27. That such closed communities had become the ideal for the Mennonites is made obvious in the emigration discussion of the 1920s. Thus, for example, B. B. Janz wrote to the fellow members of the *Studienkommission* on 7 May, 1922 with regard to a possible emigration to Paraguay: "... A segment of our society (...) will be pleased with the information from Canada. On the other hand, however, many will be oppressed by it because an entire world is disintegrating here and a new one has to be founded here and there (here or there), and that the realization of the Mennonite ideal – to establish large compact settlements where we can nurture our unique customs, culture, language etc. – will dissipate like fog in the morning sun. Everyone participated enthusiastically and spiritedly in the discussion of this ideal as depicted in Unruh's reports. Can that ideal now not be realized? I will have to give our congregations a clear answer concerning this question of a Mennonite ideal, and I cannot do so. I understand, of course, that I will receive information when I arrive there, but we would like to have a serious answer to this question from our own Stdk. We would prefer, for the good of our congregations, that, if possible, our ideal be realized somewhere. . . ." *B. B. Janz Papers*.
28. See A. A. Friesen's paper, "Betrachtungen," on the Russian Mennonites discussed toward the end of Chapter V.
29. In his *Der Molotschnaer Mennoniten-Schulrat 1869-1919: Zum Gedenktag seines 50 jährigen Bestehens*, ed. by Wladimir Suess (Goettingen: Der Goettinger Arbeitskreis, 2001): 47, Peter Braun wrote: "When universal military service was instituted in Russia in 1874 and Mennonites were deprived of their previous personal exemption, they also feared that, along with their other privileges, they might lose the right to control their own schools."
30. On the introduction and importance of the *zemstva*, see Jacob Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia* (New York: Praeger, 1967): 153-180.
31. See Heinrich Braun's "Unsere Schulen," *H. J. Braun Nachlass*, and Peter J. Braun, *Schulrat*: 72.
32. Braun, *Schulrat*, p. 86, in fact, argues that Russification was not successful, stating: "What was true in this particular case was also true generally. The attempts at Russification were not successful; in fact, the opposite was achieved. It has



- always been thus in the history of mankind: 'The more they pressured the people, the more the people rose in opposition.' That was true in this case as well. Every attempt at force produced a counter force, and that is quite natural. Patriotism, love of country and similar lovely sentiments are not produced by commands."
33. See especially Zhuk, *Russia's Lost Reformation*: 43-63.
  34. This sense of superiority comes out most clearly in Nicholas J. Fehderau's memoir, *From the Heights into the Depths* (a typed copy is in the Centre for MB Studies, Winnipeg). On p. 87 Fehderau makes the following statement: "With riches came arrogance. Many of the leading Molotschna entrepreneurs believed that they formed the Mennonite nobility and put on airs about who they were. Schroeders [a factory owner], for example, believed that they, so it was reported, had blue blood and were aristocratic Mennonites. They usually married within their families, often their cousins; thus degeneration set in. It was probably a good thing that the revolution put an end to all this."
  35. Stolypin, Prime Minister from July, 1906 until his assassination on 1 September, 1911, who introduced the most far-reaching land reforms for the Russian peasants, regarded the *mir* system – the Russian peasants' communal system of land-holding – as the greatest impediment to change. He it was who introduced laws that allowed the peasant to sell his various strips of land in the *mir* and buy parcels of land which they owned outright and could work without any interference from the village elders and council. It might be added here as well, therefore, that as long as the Russian peasant was mired in the *mir*, Mennonites as model farmers could have little or no impact upon their agricultural methods. Abraham Ascher, *P. A. Stolypin: the Search for Stability in Late Imperial Russia* (Stanford: Stanford University press, 2001): 153-154, observes: "... Ever since the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, there had been a growing awareness in Russian society that drastic steps were required to cope with the country's economic backwardness and to stimulate economic growth. The emancipation had freed the serfs, but it had also strengthened the commune, an institution whose importance for the peasants can hardly be exaggerated. In central and northern Russia, where it was primarily located, the great majority of peasants lived in the village commune, which was the legal owner of the peasants' land, provided local self-government for them, and had a large say in regulating the peasants' economic affairs. 'It is nearly impossible,' a recent study of the commune noted, 'to find a single significant social act of the peasant (within the commune, to be sure) or a significant event in his life that was not influenced by the commune, through either its formal or its informal structure. . . . [The commune] embraced not just a part of his life activity, not just parts of his personality, but his entire being and existence.' " Asher appears, however, to overemphasize Stolypin's role in the land reform matter. Reforming the *mir* had been a matter of serious discussion in Russian governmental circles long before Stolypin came to power. Indeed, Howard D. Melinger & John M. Thompson, *Count Witte and the Tsarist Government in the 1905 Revolution* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1972): 178-208, make more than apparent the key role that Witte played in making Stolypin's reform possible.
  36. In his *Thy Kingdom Come: The Diary of Johann P. Nickel 1918-1919. A Record of Violence and Faith during the Russian Civil War*, the author, on p. 54, wrote: "The proposal of the first chairman, Jacob H. Janzen, was of a different nature, however. In his opinion, we should abandon our entire Privilegium if we demanded freedom from military service, and probably should expect a more difficult form of substitute service as a result. This was honest thinking and speaking, in my opinion."

37. Jacob H. Janzen, *Lifting the Veil: Mennonite Life in Russia before the Revolution* (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 1998): 78-79, translated by Walter Klaassen.
38. A. A. Friesen *Papers*.

## CHAPTER 2

1. The piece was probably written in Russian because of the law, issued at the outset of the war, banning the use of the German language in print and public discourse, and because of its intended purpose. See note # 4 below. See also Peter J. Braun, "Archiv von Bolschewisten zerstört," *MBI* (1935): 32. I leave out the question mark that would normally come at the end of the title for the sake of convenience.
2. Henceforth this body will be referred to simply as the *KfK*.
3. See Abe J. Dueck, "Mennonites, the Russian State and the Crisis of the Brethren and Old Church Relations in Russia, 1910-1918," *MQR*, LXIX (Oct. 1995): 465, #46. In another place Dueck writes: "It is impossible to establish with any certainty whether the Mennonite Brethren prepared this statement because they felt excluded by the booklet, Who are the Mennonites?" *Ibid*: 467.
4. David G. Rempel, for years the leading interpreter of the Russian Mennonite experience, wrote in his "An Introduction to Russian Mennonite Historiography," *MQR*, XLVIII (Oct. 1974): 435: "In addition to these efforts, Epp co-authored a booklet entitled *Kto takie mennonity?* ('Who are the Mennonites?'), which saw several editions issued in 1914 and 1915. It is not absolutely clear whether the three different issues of this booklet were authored by the same person." Rempel gives no reasons for ascribing the authorship to David H. Epp. In addition to the above study, see now also James Urry, "David H. Epp: Intellectual, Spiritual, Cultural Leader, 1861-1934," in: Harry Loewen, ed., *Shepherds, Servants and Prophets: Leadership among the Russian Mennonites (ca. 1880-1960)*: (Scottsdale, PA, & Waterloo, ON: Pandora Press, 2003): 85-102.
5. One of these, *On the History of Mennonite Origins*, will be published in a subsequent book of documents dealing with this period.
6. There are a number of articles on Raduga. See, for example: Heinrich J. Braun, *Zur Erinnerung an das 25 Jährige Bestehen der ersten Mennonitischen Druckerei in Russland* (Raduga: Neu-Halbstadt, 1912), 9 pp; Abraham Kroeker, "Der Regenbogen," *Der Mithelfer*, 7 (1926/27): 24-31; Benjamin H. Unruh, "Raduga," *ML*, III (Karlsruhe: Heinrich Schneider Verlag, 1958): 425. In the second of the above, Abraham Kroeker, one of the editors of the *FrSt*, writes of an incident that occurred shortly after *Kto takie Mennonity* had been published: "During this time a curious incident took place in our business establishment. I have never quite understood how to deal properly with exalted personalities, gladly leaving this to others who were more adept at it. One day the Ispravnik (police chief) of Berdiansk visited our establishment and began to make serious accusations against us, saying that we were printing in the German language. We had namely printed a Russian brochure which, translated into German, was called 'Who are the Mennonites?' In it there appeared a number of sources, such as Friesen, 'Mennonite Churches,' cited in Latin type. That was the crime for which a severe penalty was now to be imposed upon us. That was too much for me to take. So, while he was speaking with the others, I brought him a number of Russian newspapers in which I drew his attention to the fact that all citations from foreign publications etc. always appeared in Latin type. It seemed he had not noticed this before. As a

- result, he became quiet and left the establishment. This was one example among many of how stupid fanaticism made people at the time, even high officials. We, however, were forced to endure such things. Nor were we given much of an opportunity to expose the lies and injustices that were directed toward us," p. 28.
7. Benjamin H. Unruh, *Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen im 16., 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Karlsruhe: Heinrich Schneider Verlag, 1955): note 323c, p. 402.
  8. See note 2 above.
  9. *Der Botschafter* was at first published in Ekaterinoslav, but then quickly moved to Berdiansk, where virtually all Epp's later works were published. See "Botschafter," *ML*, vol. I (Weierhof, Pfalz, 1913): 249. All of this is not to say that David H. Epp was not involved in similar activities. The St. Petersburg archives contain a document entitled *History of the Mennonites*, printed in Berdiansk in 1912 by H. Ediger that may well have been written by Epp. And Karl Lindemann, in his 1917 Russian volume on the land-liquidation problems, mentions another book on the *Origins of the Mennonites* written by H. A. Bergmann – the Duma representative – and David H. Epp, published in Petrograd in 1915. The first deals primarily with the "sect" issue and will be discussed in detail later; the second appears to deal with the land-liquidation problem directly. What ties all of these various pieces together is their common use of Keller's theory concerning Anabaptist/Mennonite origins. See the chapters on Keller in my *History and Renewal in the Anabaptist/Mennonite Tradition* (North Newton, KS: Bethel College, 1994).
  10. See my brief description in *History and Renewal*: 1-5.
  11. In an exchange between Abraham Kroeker and David H. Epp in *Der Botschafter* of September/October, 1910, Epp implied that the *Friedensstimme* was an "MB" paper, to which implication Kroeker took umbrage. See *Bt*, #74, V (8/21 Oct., 1910): 2.
  12. On H. J. Braun, see my recent "Heinrich J. Braun: Preacher, Entrepreneur, Servant of His People," in: Harry Loewen, ed., *Shepherds, Servants and Prophets*: 21-46.
  13. The term used to describe the landed estates of wealthier Russian and Mennonite landowners who lived outside the *mir*.
  14. "Mein Landbesitz im früheren Russland," personal papers of H. J. Braun in the possession of Irmgard Braun-Hörner; henceforth referred to as the *H. J. Braun Nachlass*.
  15. See Kroeker, "Der Regenbogen," p. 29.
  16. Benjamin H. Unruh to Heinrich J. Braun, 24 February, 1944. *H. J. Braun Nachlass*.
  17. Aside from the Pedagogical Institutes (*Lehrer Seminar*), these were the highest schools in the Mennonite communities, perhaps the equivalent of the German *Gymnasium*.
  18. Peter Braun may himself have had a personal incentive to write such a document since his father-in-law was a large landowner in Siberia. On Peter J. Braun see especially: Abraham Friesen, "Peter J. Braun: Educator, Archivist, Scholar, 1880-1933," in: Loewen, *Shepherds, Servants and Prophets*: 47-67.
  19. Note 323c, p. 402.
  20. In his "Professor Lic. theol. D. h. c. Benjamin Heinrich Unruh zum Gedächtnis," *Heimatbuch der Deutschen aus Russland* (Stuttgart, 1960), p. 103, Johannes Schleunig wrote: "From this point forward [March, 1917] Unruh devoted his energy to the battle of defending the rights of his fellow believers within the larger context of the Russian German community. That was a new approach for those among the Russian Mennonites who believed that they were not of German

but of Dutch extraction. They had emphasized the latter position especially during the persecution of the Germans during World War I. The fact that Unruh sought to discredit this position while at the same time defending their political independence, and that he openly associated himself with Russia's *Deutschtum*, brought him into many a difficult conflict with other Mennonites, especially those from abroad. But he remained faithful to his position [espoused in 1917] and proved it, with care and scientific accuracy, to be the only correct one in his major study: *'Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen im 16., 18. und 19. Jahrhundert'* (published privately, 1955)."

21. Unruh, *Hintergründe*, note 232c, p. 402.
22. Benjamin H. Unruh, *Die Auswanderung der niederdeutschen mennonitischen Bauern aus der Sowetunion, 1923-1933* (unpublished manuscript): Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University. Even Peter Braun's diary kept during the turbulent years after 1917 is quoted extensively in this manuscript.
23. Peter J. Braun to Jacob H. Janzen, 3 August, 1928: *Peter J. Braun Correspondence*.
24. See Kroeker, "Der Regenbogen," p. 28.
25. During this time, Braun returned to a number of these issues in separate essays. Aside from that, the translator, Peter Braun the younger, left Russia in 1930, sailed nearly immediately to Brazil where he remained for a year before returning to Germany, probably sometime in 1932. Only after his return would he have been able to translate the document.
26. The fact that Braun apparently sought to publish a third, revised and expanded version so much later after the initial occasion for its genesis – and that in a German translation when a major portion of the argument advocated the Dutch origin theory of the Russian Mennonites – is in itself most interesting. In any case, it is this potential third edition that will be printed, in an English translation prepared from the second 1915 Russian edition supplemented by the German translation, in a separate volume of documents. Changes from one edition to the other will be duly noted.
27. E-mail information sent me by James Urry. Indeed, as we shall note later, David H. Epp together with H. A. Bergmann did present a document to the St. Petersburg government on the issue in 1915.
28. See David Rempel's remark in his "Russian Mennonite Historiography": "The closing of *Der Botschafter* [in the fall of 1914] virtually deprived Epp of his livelihood, and the vicissitudes of three years of war, shortages of material and inflation seriously depleted the fortunes of his financial backers . . .," p. 431.
29. B. H. Unruh, "Vorfragen zur wissenschaftlichen Klärung der Herkunft des russland-deutschen Mennonitentums," *Bote*, #14 (1937): 2.
30. *Ibid.* Peter J. Braun died in September, 1933. Therefore the manuscript must have come into Unruh's hands after this date but before his publication of early 1937.
31. We will return to Unruh's discussion later.
32. This is especially true of the German translation of the revised 2<sup>nd</sup> edition which has as its subtitle: "Concerning the Question of the Liquidation of Lands held by Germans [in Russia]," manuscript copy.
33. See page 2 of the 1914 edition.
34. There is no precise date of publication, only the date that the document was approved for publication by the military censors.
35. See David G. Rempel, "The Expropriation of the German Colonists in South Russia during the Great War," p. 53. Sazanov was then Russia's foreign minister. Why would the recommendation have come from him? Perhaps because of his long-

- standing opposition to Germany's aggressive foreign policy at the time.
36. See Terry Martin, "The German Question in Russia, 1848-1896," *Russian History / Histoire Russe*, vol. 18, No. 4 (1991): 373-434, and Harvey L. Dyck, ed. & trans., "Russian Mennonites and the Challenge of Russian Nationalism, 1889," *MQR*, vol. LVI, # 4 (October, 1982): 307-341.
  37. Benjamin Unruh recognized this, for he repeatedly remarked that the document had been political, rather than scholarly, from the very outset.
  38. On J. H. Willms, see B. H. Unruh, "Johann H. Willms," *MR*, 28 July (1926): 2-3.
  39. Johann H. Willms, "Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Auswanderungsbewegung. Erinnerungen und Eindrücke," *Bote* (9 February, to 27 April, 1927).
  40. *Ibid*, 20 April (1927): 3. Willms is certainly mistaken here. Bondar's book on the "Mennonite Sect" was not published until 1916. In that book Bondar is the one who makes at least three rather innocuous references to Peter Braun's *Kto takie Mennonity?* He could not have done so if Braun's booklet had been a response to Bondar's book.
  41. David H. Epp, "Die Bedeutung der mennonitischen Kolonisation in Russland," *Bote*: 11 June through 25 June (1924).
  42. David H. Epp, "Die Bedeutung der mennonitischen Kolonisation in Russland," *Bote*: 18 June, (1924): 3.
  43. See especially P. M. Friesen, *Sekte oder Konfession* (Halbstadt: Raduga Verlag, 1914).
  44. This became increasingly problematic, especially after 1873. See Terry Martin, "The German Question in Russia, 1848-1896," *Russian History*, vol. 18, No. 4 (1991): 373-434.
  45. Even Karl Lindemann's articles against the liquidation laws were not printed in the Russian press. In his 1917 book he connected the anti-German witch-hunt with what he termed the other disease of Russian society: "This disease is called 'injuivement,' 'Verjudung,' 'Jewsation.' Our free press is completely in the hands of the Jews. Not only the Jewish capitalists but also their Jewish journalists control 'Russian public opinion.' At the same time, due to their competition with them in commercial, industrial and professional sectors, all these Jews are very hostile towards the German settlers. Therefore, the destruction of the settlers' capital would profit the Jews. The root of this rivalry goes all the way back to the relations between Jews and German colonists in South Russia. In the latter ones especially it was the norm to fine anyone (25 rubles) who provided overnight lodging to a Jew. It is therefore logical that Jews established such a strong censorship in the free press, so strong that even editors could not publish anything that might help to produce a positive attitude toward the German citizens of Russia. Even in Germany, as one French newspaper writes, all the 'theaters are in the hands of the Jews, all editors are Jewish, all major presses are Jewish,'" p. 63. As will be noted in the chapter on the problem of land-liquidation, Lindemann addressed this issue in the Molotschna in 1917 and stayed at the home of H. J. Braun while there. It is not our purpose here to investigate the truth or falsity of Lindemann's statement. What is our concern, however, is that Lindemann must have communicated this message to both H. J. and his brother Peter, along with many others, while in the Molotschna. No doubt they also later – like B. H. Unruh – read Lindemann's book. And both were later to come to Germany: H. J. in 1922, Peter in 1924. Did such statements influence their later attitude toward Hitler and the Nazis?
  46. Peter J. Braun, "Archiv von Bolschewisten zertrört," *MBI* (1935): 32.
  47. See Jacob H. Janzen, *Lifting the Veil*: 98.

48. B. H. Unruh, "Praktische Fragen," *Bote*, 28 October (1936): 2. One of the "other" reasons may have been the fact that H. J. Braun, who had been very much involved in these negotiations as we shall see, was still very much alive. He died in 1946.
49. B. H. Unruh, "Um die deutsche Sache," *Bote*: 10 February, (1937): 2.
50. B. H. Unruh, "Praktische Fragen," *Bote*: 10 November, (1937): 1. There he wrote: "I feel myself compelled to reject a certain misinterpretation [if it was really a misinterpretation I will not address at this point] of my statements most energetically." Was Unruh's antipathy to that submission in any way related to his growing "Nazi" sympathies, sympathies that can no longer be denied?
51. This may have been the case after 1922, but not in 1914/1915.
52. The Dutch origin of the Prussian/Russian Mennonites is, at least by implication, denied here.
53. In a letter of 27 November, 1919 to Dr. S. H. N. Gorter of Amsterdam, Unruh identified the writer of this document and its famous line: "Some of our people did indeed speak very thoughtlessly during the time when the tsars pursued their land liquidation policies, but only in isolated instances. In a particularly indefensible submission which the notorious 'missionary' Thiessen from Holland, at the time living in St. Petersburg, signed and presented to the tsar without any authorization whatsoever, stood the sentence: 'Not a drop of German blood flows in our veins! We reject everything Germanic!' – Such a blockhead. Our brothers pounded the table with their fists." *MHC*, Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization Papers, vol. 1165, folder 15. On Johann Thiessen, see *ML*, vol. IV: 316. In a letter to B. B. Janz of 14 May, 1922, however, Unruh wrote, regarding the label, "Association of Citizens of Dutch Ancestry": "If I may speak openly, I regret the name of the association. It is true that a large percentage of the Russian Mennonites came from the Netherlands. But that our Dutch descent or more precisely, the Dutch descent of a part of our congregations should be so publicly paraded abroad can only have unwelcome consequences. In any case our position has now been made much more difficult in Berlin. The Studienkommission has always and everywhere openly stressed that we are not ashamed of our home in the Netherlands. But that we had to defend ourselves was proof that an irritated sentiment against us existed in the land. *One is well aware in Berlin of Braun and Thiessen's notorious submission during the period of the land liquidation laws* . . . [my emphasis]": *B. B. Janz Papers*, Folder 152. The "Braun" mentioned here is H. J. Braun.
54. As we shall yet see, Mennonite nonresistance during the war also became a major factor.
55. "Das Schulwesen unserer deutsch-evangel. Stammesbrüder in Süd-Russland," *H. J. Braun Nachlass*. An anonymous document in the B. B. Janz papers, MB Studies Centre & Archives, entitled: "Unsere grosse Vaterlandsliebe u. Treue zum Kaisertrone erhält einen Schlag u. wird schwer geprüft," we read: "The tsarist government issued its land liquidation laws on 2 February, 1915 and 13 December, 1915 according to which the total landed property of all Russian Germans was to be liquidated. Since it also contained the additional clause (. . .), it also applied to all Tatars and Bulgarians. What was the reason for the promulgation of this law? The soldiers fighting in the war demanded compensation. Since the larger Russian landowners, holding between 1,000 and 10,000, and up to 100,000 dessiatines were unwilling to give up any of their land, they directed the attention of the Russian populace to the land of the Russian Germans. During the 100 years of their sojourn in Russian the Mennonites had refrained from becoming involved in

politics and therefore, justifiably enough, did not come under the clause (Wrasciesk. Proisgoscgenija). Since the vast majority were of Dutch descent, it was decided at a special meeting:

" 1. To have every individual land owner submit a petition to the tsar in which he asked for mercy: specifically (milostkewig Zar, priskaschicke ne kasnik enja a pomilawatz). **"Brother H. Braun from Halbstadt was elected plenipotentiary to represent us in this matter** [my emphasis]; thereupon he soon left for Petersburg and from time to time reported to us from there. Since the war went from bad to worse for the Russians and the displeasure in the army increased, [the government] began to move forward more forcefully with its land liquidation plans.

"Br. Braun was provided with the means [to carry out his mission] from the, at the time, still wealthy Mennonite volost governments. In one letter he wrote: even here in the North they know how to value a good Dutch milk cow." This last sentence would seem to be a fairly obvious reference to bribes being paid to Russian officials in Petrograd. **B. B. Janz Papers**, Files 42-56, Box 2.

56. What is meant is the carrying on of evangelistic activity.

57. A. Kroeker, "Wieder Nachricht aus Russland," *MR*, # 28 (11 July, 1917): 3. In his *Lebenslauf*, H. J. Braun wrote: "A difficult time began for the German colonists in Russia with the onset of the Great War of 1914. Suddenly we were mistrusted and hated by everyone even though we had been loyal citizens for over 100 years. I myself was banned to Siberia in June of 1915 for the duration of the war. I had supposedly been involved in propaganda on behalf of Germany. For 22 months I had to stay away from home as a banned person." *H. J. Braun Nachlass*.

58. Volume 14 of the *Schriften des Deutschen Ausland-Instituts* (Stuttgart, 1924).

59. *Ibid*: 117.

60. *B. B. Janz Papers*.

### CHAPTER 3

1. Translated by J. B. Toews et. al. from the original, *Alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Bruderschaft in Russland (1789-1910) im Rahmen der mennonitischen Gesamtgeschichte* (Halbstadt: Raduga Verlag, 1911), (Winnipeg: Christian Press, 1978).
2. David H. Epp, "Der Untergang der russländischen Mennonitengemeinden als solcher," *Bt*, # 73 (16 September, 1911): 3-4.
3. "Public History" has long been written, but it was first developed as a separate historical discipline by my colleague Robert Kelley at the University of California, Santa Barbara (see the journal, *The Public Historian*, still being published by the History Department). Since its formal inception the discipline has become established far and wide as a specialized branch of historical studies.
4. Two classic documents of this type now in the process of being published derive from the Swiss Anabaptists in the 1580s. Entitled "A Simple Confession," the one runs some 460 manuscript pages, while the other, derivative from the first, runs some 80 to 90 pages. The first has been translated by Leonard Gross and Abraham Friesen and will be published in the *Classics of the Radical Reformation* series; the second, also translated by Abraham Friesen, is still looking for a publisher. An earlier document similar in nature and purpose was Menno Simons's "Appeal to the Christian Princes" of the early 1540s. Perhaps one should even look at *The Hutterite Chronicle* and Van Braght's *Martyrs Mirror* from this point of view.
5. W. Mannhardt, *Die Wehrfreiheit* (1863).
6. Peter Hildebrand, *Erste Auswanderung der Mennoniten aus dem danziger Gebiet*

- nach Südrussland* (Halbstadt: P. Neufeld, 1888), translated by Walter E. Toews & Adolf Ens (Winnipeg: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 2000).
7. David H. Epp, *Die Chortitzer Mennoniten. Versuch einer Darstellung des Entwicklungsganges derselben* (Rosenthal, 1889).
  8. In the introduction Epp remarked: "May his [Cornies'] good example therefore also serve as a stimulus to awaken a practical charity [love of fellow-man] in our selfish age, and may his energy and thirst for action give new life to our lack of constructive deeds in the realm of charity." David H. Epp, *Johann Cornies. Züge aus seinem Leben und Wirken* (Berdiansk: Der Botschafter, 1909): 2.
  9. David H. Epp, *Die Memriker Ansiedlung: Zum 25-jährigen Bestehen derselben im Herbst 1910* (Berdiansk: Ediger & Co., 1910).
  10. See his posthumously published *A Mennonite Family in Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, 1789-1923* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002): esp. 135-147.
  11. Many volumes in this series have recently been translated into English under the General Editorship of Victor G. Doerksen. As the latter observes in his Forwards: "This publishing venture derived its name from *ehemalige Schüler der Chortitzer Zentralschule* (former students of the Chortitza high school) . . .," thereby immortalizing the impact the school and its teachers had upon the historical consciousness of its students in the early decades of the twentieth century. See also the essay on Arnold Dyck by Al Reimer, *Shepherds, Servants and Prophets*: 69-84.
  12. Edited by Wladimir Suess (Goettingen: Der Goettinger Arbeitskreis, 2001).
  13. *FrSt*, X, # 1 (4 January, 1912): 5.
  14. In his brief biographical sketch of Braun, B. H. Unruh wrote of this manuscript as: ". . . which, sadly, became a casualty of the events of the war . . .," *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch* (1952): 29. But the manuscript has just recently been discovered in the Odessa archives by Wladimir Suess of Kassel, Germany, as we noted in the last chapter. This is the copy that may have been in Unruh's possession at the time of the war. For unlike Unruh's own manuscript on the Russian Mennonite emigration movement which ended up in the Hoover library where I have inspected it, it is possible – as Unruh claimed – that his extensive archives were lost during the war and its aftermath. It has often been asserted that – because of compromising Nazi connections – Unruh himself destroyed much of his archive. But he obviously did not destroy his own or Braun's manuscripts.

In an "Arbeitsbericht" (Work Report) of 19 December, 1945, Unruh wrote: "Today it is exactly one year since my wife and I came here to our relatives because the events of the war had made Karlsruhe unsafe, making evacuation preferable. Since the T[echnical] U[niversity] in K[arlsruhe] had also ceased all operations, I no longer had any teaching obligations there. Even so, I desired to move here with my wife who, during 1917/22 in our old homeland, had suffered a great deal and could no longer remain in the vicinity of the front. At the same time, I had received an order to remove my entire archive to a safe haven. My hope was, from my location in Adelsheim, the more easily to make use of it for my historical studies dealing with the emigration of the Mennonites since 1923 to North, Central, and South America. The university informed me that the chests of materials would be sent to Central Germany, a region that is currently within the Russian zone. Since the materials consisted of documents that belonged to an organization under the jurisdiction of MCC, an American relief organization, I hoped that my university could still see to it that they might be brought into the American zone in a timely manner. To ensure that this would happen, I contacted a colleague from the TU in this matter several weeks before the expansion of the



- Russian zone who I had heard, was to replace the dismissed chancellor. Daniel Lichti, my brother-in-law, along with my oldest son, brought this request of mine [the following crossed out and illegible], but he [U's colleague] had no success. The provisional leadership of the university did not act decisively enough, until it was too late." In 1955 he wrote: "My extremely rich Russian-German archive, with 37 chests of first class historical material, my entire special collection of *volksdeutsche* literature, and my approximately 6 ready-for-publication volumes dealing with Russian-German history, had to be evacuated before Germany's collapse only to be confiscated in the Eastern zone. The government will confirm this at any time to anyone who enquires." *Benjamin H. Unruh Papers*.
15. Peter Braun to Jacob H. Janzen, 3 August, 1929: *Peter J. Braun Correspondence*.
  16. In a letter to C. Henry Smith of 8 February, 1938, regarding information the latter had requested on the Russian Mennonite *KfK*, Jacob H. Janzen wrote: "Do you really know to whom you are applying for historical data on an important subject? I am a novelist, i.e. a fiction writer, i.e. according to the general opinion of the Mennonites, a great liar. How could a man like that add to the value of an earnest historical writing?" *C. Henry Smith Collection*.
  17. Braun sent his introduction to Janzen with his letter of 3 August, 1929. Apparently, as Unruh, in his above-mentioned biography, and a number of Braun's correspondents pointed out, Peter Braun had a fabulous memory which he trained assiduously throughout his life. But, as any primer on historical research will point out, he should have noted his sources as he wrote.
  18. Peter Braun to Abraham Braun, 16 November, 1932. In the possession of Irmgard Braun-Hörner, but also in the Braun papers in the MLA at Bethel College. At some future date I intend to discuss this "brotherly" exchange on the MB/Old Mennonite problem in Russia. That Peter's extensive comments – running some 12 closely written pages (Abraham's essay itself runs only some 12 printed pages) – undoubtedly transformed his brother's essay, is clear. So much so that Robert Friedmann, in his *Mennonite Piety through the Centuries: Its Genius and Its Literature* (Goshen, IN: The Mennonite Historical Society, 1949): 70, observed: "The 'Festschrift' article [of A. Braun] is one of the best ever written on the Mennonites of Russia." That Peter Braun should be given the credit for this no one will doubt who has read the letter.
  19. See Abraham Friesen, "P. M. Friesen the Historian," in Abraham Friesen, ed., *P. M. Friesen & His History: Understanding Mennonite Brethren Beginnings* (Fresno: Center for MB Studies, 1979): 98. This was before my "Menno Simons Lectures" on Ludwig Keller published as *History and Renewal in the Anabaptist/Mennonite Tradition*. That C. H. Wedel's work was well known among the Russian Mennonites – at least by David H. Epp – is demonstrated by a substantial report written by the editor on the occasion of his death in *Bt*, #27, V (6 (19) April, 1910): 4, in which it is also noted that Wedel visited Russia "a few years ago." And in the *FrSt*, II, #47 (19 June, 1910): 3, there was another lengthy "biographical sketch" of C. H. Wedel by H. R. Voth.
  20. C. H. Wedel, *Abriss der Geschichte der Mennoniten*, vol. 2 (1902): 3. There, at the top of his list of "useful books," Wedel placed the following Keller studies: *Die Reformation und die älteren Reformparteien; Johann Staupitz; Geschichte der Wiedertäufer und ihres Reichs zu Münster; Hans Denck; Zur Geschichte der Altevangelischen Gemeinden; Grundfragen der Reformationsgeschichte; Die Anfänge der Reformation und die Ketzerschulen*.
  21. The term used is "Volk." It crops up regularly in the Russian Mennonite documents of the time, usually in the form of "Völklein." This usage cries for investi-

- gation since it appears to be an essential aspect of their self-understanding. To my knowledge only Peter P. Klassen, *Die Deutsch-Völkische Zeit in der Kolonie Fernheim, Chaco, Paraguay, 1933-1945* (Bolanden-Weierhof: Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein e.V, 1990), and in his study on the Mennonites in Paraguay has investigated the use of the term in Mennonite history.
22. Braun has this phrase in quotation marks, but does not say from where he got it. It more than likely comes from B. H. Unruh's review of David H. Epp's book on Johann Cornies in *Der Botschafter* of 17 November, 1909, p. 3, where Unruh quotes Lepsius as saying, among other things: "for history is the greatest of teachers . . ." With regard to Keller's influence on the Russian Mennonites, even Unruh makes the significant statement: "It is of the greatest importance for our *Volk* that its history has, in recent years, begun to be studied by people from out of its own midst. To be sure, we had first to be shown our treasures by outsiders (*I remind the readers of the foundational studies by Ludwig Keller that have as yet not been adequately evaluated by the theological profession*) [my emphasis]."
  23. *FrSt*, X, 1 (4 January, 1912): 5.
  24. Alexander Klaus published his book on the German colonies in Russia in the Russian language in 1867. When the German translation by Jakob Toews appeared some twenty years later, a notice appeared in the *Odessaer Zeitung*. It stated, in part: "When the translation was ready for publication, Toews turned to a number of his wealthy fellow believers to request the money needed for publication. But despite the fact that he tried to convince them of the project's importance, no one so much as listened to him. Indeed, a number of them summarily rejected his request, saying it would only be so much wasted money," p. 2.
  25. H. Ediger, in his *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben* (Karlsruhe: Selbstverlag, 1927): 38-51, who owned a printing press in Berdiansk that published much of David H. Epp's material as well as *Der Botschafter*, tells the story of his fine and one-day imprisonment for having published – by his manager and without his knowledge – a laudatory poem in honor of Tsar Alexander II several days after the latter's death on 1 November, 1895, but not having first cleared it with the censors. On the changes introduced by the October, 1905 Manifesto in this regard, see Caspar Ferenczi, "Freedom of the Press under the Old Regime, 1905-1914," in: Olga Crisp & Linda Edmondson, eds., *Civil Rights in Imperial Russia* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1989): 191-214.
  26. See P. M. Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*: 835. The establishment of these periodicals was clearly tied to the 17 October, 1905 Manifesto that granted, among other things, freedom of the press.
  27. P. M. Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*: 689-808, lists many of these and where they had studied.
  28. See P. M. Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*: 780-787.
  29. John F. Harms, *Geschichte der Mennoniten Brüdergemeinde* (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1926): 17-19 argues that it was Johannes Harder, Elder of the Ohrloff congregation, who, through his positive evaluation of the new movement, set a much more friendly tone to the relationship that eventually permeated the entire Molotschna colony and led to these better relationships between the two groups.
  30. On Unruh see now: Jakob Warkentin, "Benjamin Heinrich Unruh: Teacher, Scholar, Statesman 1881-1959," in: Loewen, *Shepherds, Servants and Prophets*: 401-425.
  31. Theodore Ediger was the son of H. Ediger, owner of the printing press in Berdiansk and sometime mayor of the city. He graduated from the University of Leipzig with a Ph. D. in history in 1908.

32. Since Epp mentions Anna Brons' book on the Anabaptists, Mannhardt's *Jahrbuch*, and Klaus' *Unsere Kolonien* in his *Die Chortitzer Mennoniten* (Odessa: Selbstverlag, 1889): iii, but not the books by Ludwig Keller, one might be led to assume that he was not as yet then aware of Keller's works. But in the opening sentence of his first chapter he observes: "Our fellow believers, formerly called 'Taufgesinnte,' then 'Menists,' now 'Mennonites,' after Menno the *reformer* [not founder] of this fellowship, were forced, in ancient times, to suffer severe persecution for their religious beliefs." This is at least the language of Martin Klaassen, if not of Keller.
33. David H. Epp, *Kurze Erklärungen und Erläuterungen zum "Katechismus der christlichen taufgesinnten Gemeinden, so Mennoniten genannt werden"* (Odessa: Selbstverlag, 1897). A second edition was published in Ekaterinoslav in 1899.
34. Such an "appendix" had already been added by Tieleman Tielen van Sittert in his edition of a 1664 confession. The van Sittert "appendix" was later taken over by the Russian Mennonites when they published a 1660 Prussian Mennonite Confession of Faith. Epp was obviously familiar with this Russian edition and used it as a model. See Robert Friedmann, *Mennonite Piety*: 118-119.
35. P. M. Friesen was fully aware of it – and therefore also of Keller's interpretation. This is made apparent on p. 834 of his *Mennonite Brotherhood* where he cites Epp's *Kurze Erklärung*.
36. *Bt* (17 November, 1909): 3. The impact this review, and especially the above passage, had upon the developing Russian Mennonite historical consciousness can be seen by the fact that David H. Epp himself, in his *Die Memriker Ansiedlung*: 7-8, cited it in full, stating: "I cannot but repeat here what Lic. theol. B. Unruh, in N. 91 of the *Botschafter*, of the year 1909 says on this matter." In connection with this quotation Epp also recommended reading P. M. Friesen's just published *Mennonite Brotherhood*.
37. In his *Unsere Kolonien*, p. 297, Klaus wrote: "The Mennonites here in Russia still retain much of their earlier simplicity; they have naturally remained true to their, for them not disadvantageous, rejection of military service; and yet, in spite of all this, they have nevertheless moved quite far from their Mennonite foundation. The sermons read from their pulpits derive from Lutheran, Reformed, Baptist and other preachers; all the while the writings of Menno Simons remain totally unknown!"
38. Christian Neff, "Das vierhundertjährige Jubiläum der Mennoniten," *MR* (5 November, 1924): 4. This absence of interest in history, even of their own history, has intrigued Mennonite historians over the years. David H. Epp, in his *Die Memriker Ansiedlung*, p.6, observed: "People that are ignorant of their own history abandon themselves and will soon find themselves undergoing a process of dissolution." David Rempel himself tried to determine the reasons "why Russian Mennonitism in general showed so little interest in its past until it faced virtual annihilation." In his 1974 essay on Russian Mennonite historiography he listed the primary reasons as the Mennonites' "hidebound traditionalism" and their conservative views on life and religion. In an April 1977 letter to the author he suggested that many "of our people prefer to hear or to read about that [Russian Mennonite] experience not so much as the event actually occurred but as they wished to have had it happen." They preferred pious myths to the hard reality. Like Peter Hildebrand, they wished to "remain silent concerning all the discord and disunity." Perhaps, however, all of these arguments become moot when one considers the assertions of historians like J. H. Plumb who argue that, "In contrast to England, its [the Dutch] political problems and social divisions were never caught up in an imaginary sense of the past. The real world was the Dutch world.

- The precarious nature of its strategic situation as well as the nature of its economic activity bred a sense of actuality." In the real world of the Dutch there was no time for history. Introduction to C. R. Boxer's *The Dutch Seaborne Empire* (Penguin Books, 1988): xxv. As descendants of these 16<sup>th</sup> century Dutchmen, the Russian Mennonites perhaps never had a strong sense of, or interest in, history in any case.
39. *Bt* (17 (30) November, 1909): 3.
  40. *Bt*, #99, IV (15 (28) December, 1909): 3.
  41. Klassen's essay was entitled: "Die älteste Täufergemeinden und Menno Simons," *Bt*, #84, IV (23 October, 1909): 3; #86, IV: 3-4; #87, IV: 3-4. The opening line of the essay reads: "It was a dynamic period – the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries." Mannhardt's pamphlet began: "It was a great and dynamic time that began around 1440 and lasted beyond the mid-point of the following century . . . ." H. G. Mannhardt, *Menno Simons, 100 Jährige Geburtsstagsfeier den 6. November, 1892* (Danzig: Edwin Groening, 1892): 2. Both opening lines are a little reminiscent of Snoopy's more famous opening line: "It was a dark and stormy night . . . ." Snoopy never got published . . . .
  42. *Bt*, #84, IV (23 October, 1909): 3.
  43. *Bt*, #68, VI (30 August, 1911): 3.
  44. *Ibid.*
  45. Ein Vereinsmitglied, "Abgelehnt," *Bt*, #3, VII (10 January, 1912): 3.
  46. The dissertation, entitled: *Russlands älteste Beziehungen zu Deutschland, Frankreich und der römischen Kurie* (Halle a.S.: Hohmann, 1911), lists Ediger as coming from Berdiansk.
  47. Though Ediger does not say so directly, his description of the Church History primer would appear to point to C. H. Wedel's brief Church History, entitled: *Kurzgefasste Kirchengeschichte für Schüler und Familien* (Newton, KS: Bethel College, 1905): 184-187. Anabaptism gets some three pages and Menno is only mentioned once in connection with a number of other early leaders. Münster gets a whole page but Menno is not mentioned in connection with it.
  48. Theodor Ediger, "Die Einführung des mennonitischen Geschichtsunterrichts," *Bt*, #33, VII (27 April, 1912): 3.
  49. At the conference Epp is reported to have said: "If guilt is to be assessed at this point, then I must confess myself to be the guilty party, for I am the one who initiated this matter. But when I made the recommendation to include Mennonite history in the teaching schedule of our elementary schools, I based the recommendation on my 33 years of experience as a teacher. Mennonite history is to be understood as a supplement to instruction in religion, not as a separate instructional subject." *Bt*, #84, VII (27 April, 1912): 3.
  50. *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch*, #10 (1913): 78-83. The second part of the paper, entitled: "Methodik eines rationellen Geschichtsunterrichts," was presented by Ediger at the next General Conference held in Rudnerweide in August of 1913.
  51. *Ibid.*: 78-79.
  52. David H. Epp himself wrote about the dangers this educational explosion posed to a larger lay and uneducated ministry in an article entitled: "Der Untergang der russländischen Mennonitengemeinden als solcher," *Bt*, #73 (16 September, 1911): 3-4. There he also noted: "The Mennonites in Russia have, in the last six to seven years, experienced an educational expansion that has no parallel in the last one hundred years. The ever-increasing attention being devoted to the elementary schools; the founding of a whole series of Central Schools, up to and including a university preparatory Middle School, testify to this fact. To this development

must be added the fact that our young people are, by the dozens, going to the cities, foreign countries, in order to study at such university preparatory schools and the universities themselves. There is hardly any branch of learning any more where we cannot count on one of our own."

53. *Ibid*: 80-83.
54. C. H. Wedel, *Bilder aus der Kirchengeschichte für mennonitische Gemeindeschulen*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Newton, KS: Bethel College, 1904).
55. See his letter of 1944 to H. J. Braun, cited above.
56. B. H. Unruh, "Der mennonitische Geschichtsunterricht in der Dorfschule," *Bt*: VII, #88 (9 Nov. 1912): 3-4.
57. *Bt*: VII, # 91 (20 Nov. 1912): 4.
58. *Bt*: VII, # 93 (27 Nov. 1912): 3.
59. A very similar argument is taking place in the schools of Canada and the United States even as we write. Can one learn anything meaningful at all from doing isolated "projects" or "modules" in history, however much they may allow the student to go "in depth" when no continuities or meaningful larger picture or understanding is achieved?
60. Theodor Ediger, "Der mennonitische Geschichtsunterricht in der Dorfschule," *Bt*, VII, # 94 (30 Nov. 1912): 3.
61. Theodor Ediger, "Methodik eines rationellen Geschichtsunterrichts," *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch* (1913): 83.
62. *Ibid*: 85.
63. *Ibid*: 86.
64. *Ibid*: 87.
65. Over the last year and a half, I have been working on an essay dealing with Keller's influence on late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Mennonites. In the process, I have carefully read through the entire 4 volumes of the *Lexikon*, tracing his influence.
66. Ediger, "Methodik," *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch* (1913): 89.
67. *Bt*, #84, VII (26 October, 1912): 3.
68. Report on the conference, *Bt*, #63, VIII (23 August, 1913): 3.
69. Preis-Ausschreiben," *Bt*, #75, VIII (20 September, 1913): 3.
70. The Russian Mennonite prize was clearly modeled on the German Mennonite precedent, first published in the *MBI* in August, 1903, #8, p. 62. In its July, 1905, #7, p. 64 issue, the proclamation was repeated. It took some time for a German primer to be written. But when finally written, it was – by universal consent – an excellent one.
71. Unruh's primer nearly immediately came under attack and he was forced to explain and defend it in a series of articles printed in *Bt*.
72. David H. Epp, "Neue Pflegestätten der mennonitischen Geschichte," *Bt*, #88, VIII (5 November, 1913): 3-4. In the last sentence we have the title of Epp's own manuscript: "Bausteine zur Geschichte der Mennoniten in S. Russland."
73. "Minutes of the General Conference of Mennonites in Russia, Neuhalbstadt Conference, 6-8 June, 1917," Toews, *Selected Documents*: 396-404, esp. pp. 397-398.
74. I have searched far and wide for a copy, but have found nothing. Not even the collection of his Papers in the MLA, which contains a number of Braun's other public presentations, contains this one. In his *Die Auswanderung*, pp. 137-144, B. H. Unruh reproduces a detailed outline of what was to be collected which Peter J. Braun had written and sent out to the churches to guide them in their work. It is entitled: "Gesichtspunkte für die Sammlung und Sichtung des in unseren Dörfern vorhandenen historischen Materials" and is a virtual roadmap to Russian

- Mennonite history from the time of their immigration to the end of World War I. It is meticulous in its detail, comprehensive in its coverage, and brilliant in its organization. It would be interesting to compare it with the actual contents of the materials collected in Braun's archive.
75. "To the Mennonite Congregations in Russia," MLA: found in the *H.R. Voth Papers*. I am grateful to John Thiesen for locating this document, for it makes quite apparent the importance of historical documents in the "public" defense of Mennonite interests in Russia.
  76. The scholarly argument, of course, had been made long before 1909, but only by isolated voices. Nevertheless, even the growing chorus of voices after 1909 had little impact upon the rank and file Mennonite. Indeed, the circular observed: "*Scholarly*, to the extent that Mennonite historical research would be powerfully advanced through the presence of such an archive. We – and already our forefathers – have been guilty of consciously neglecting our history; we have not taken seriously the Lord's admonition to the Israelites to make known to our children and their descendants the history of our ancestors; and the sad consequence of this is not only an astonishing and unforgivable ignorance of our own history, but an actual conscious disregard for it. We encounter this disregard at every turn. Over the years we have become accustomed to an unhistorical mode of thinking which, in most instances, never gets beyond our own personal experiences and recollections. In this regard we need to recall what Lic. Theol. Benj. Unruh wrote in No. 91 of the 1909 *Botschafter* . . . ." And then follows the by now famous passage. Since this passage is virtually identical to passages in Braun's 1912 review of P. M. Friesen's history, the circular must also have been written by him.
  77. "Die Stellung der Mennoniten zur Frage von der Glaubensfreiheit und der Propaganda" (Halbstadt, Taurida: Raduga Verlag, 1910), published under the general title: *Dokumente über Glaubensangelegenheiten der Mennoniten*: MHC.
  78. P. 636.
  79. *Bt*, #84, VII (26 October, 191): 5.
  80. *Ibid*.
  81. Quoted verbatim in Karl Lindemann's, *Von den deutschen Kolonisten in Russland*: 29-31.
  82. It must be said, however, that Mannhardt's treatise on Mennonite nonresistance is far superior to anything written by the Russian Mennonites.

## CHAPTER 4

1. As we shall see in what follows, the Prussian/Russian Mennonites had a strongly developed tradition that Mennonites were not "Anabaptists." They therefore made a distinction between "Taufgesinnte" (Mennonites) and "Wiedertäufer" (Münsterites). In his article on "Mennoniten" in the *ML* (vol. III, p. 102), Christian Neff ascribes the gradual adoption of the term "Mennonite" in Swiss, German and some Dutch circles to its utility as a "Schutzname" (a protective cover) and as a means to differentiate the peaceful from the revolutionary Anabaptists, especially the Münsterites. The first use of the term "Menist" appears to have been by Countess Anna of East Friesland in a 1544 edict in which she herself differentiated between the Münsterites, followers of David Joris, the Battenburgers, and Menno Simons. Initially even opposed by Menno himself, the term proved too helpful to be set aside, becoming more and more common because it set barriers between Menno and Münster specifically, and the peaceful "Täufer" and revolutionaries.

But what is intriguing about the use of these terms by the Prussian Mennonites – and later by their Russian brothers – is that the distinction appears to have been adopted by the Prussian/Polish authorities early on, an adoption that led to the Mennonites being tolerated in the realm. Thus Lengnich wrote in his *Jus Publicum*, p. 509: “Only the Mennonites, who do not associate themselves with any of the three officially recognized religions (Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed), are tolerated without let or hindrance and constitute a twofold congregation which hold their church services in two separate houses in the city’s suburbs, having their own preachers, or, as they call them, their admonishers. After the second half of the sixteenth century, as the Mennonites, coming from the Netherlands, began to settle in Danzig and its suburbs, some of the ordinances referred to them as ‘Wiedertäufer or Anabaptists’ with the intention of forcing them away. But after it became known that they were no Wiedertäufer they [the authorities] ceased to attack them because of their religion. Nor did King John III wish to charge them with anything in his decree; instead, he postponed a decision to a later date; and the most recent royal order has, to be sure, limited them in their economic activity, but has not denied them the right to live here granted thus far.”

2. See my “Baptist Interpretations of Anabaptist History,” in: Paul Toews, ed., *Mennonites and Baptists*: 39-40.
3. “Ist die mennonitische Gemeinschaft eine ‘Sekte’ oder ist sie die ‘Fortsetzung der ursprünglichen christlichen Kirche?’” See my *History and Renewal*: 95.
4. The passage is quoted in Friesen, *History and Renewal*: 102.
5. It was also reissued in Canada in 1941.
6. See Klaus’ statement about Mennonite sermons.
7. Epp’s “recovery” of Keller’s interpretation coincides almost exactly with the beginning of the educational explosion among Russian Mennonites referred to by Epp himself.
8. On the circular and its promotion, see Friesen, *History and Renewal*: 56-61.
9. In a list entitled: “Books obtained from the Chortitza Mennonite Church in the Ukraine,” sent me some years ago by Klippenstein, the following Keller books were named: 1) *Die Reformation und die älteren Reformparteien* (Leipzig, 1885); 2) *Hans Denck: Ein Apostel der Wiedertäufer* (Leipzig, 1882); and 3) *Die Waldenser und die deutschen Bibelübersetzungen* (Leipzig, 1886). Also on the list was Ignaz von Doellinger’s *Beiträge zur Sektengeschichte des Mittelalters, 2ter Teil* – documents in Latin, now in my possession. For some reason, Klippenstein kept the Keller books from me.
10. On Rauschenbusch’s negative appraisal of Keller’s interpretation, see my “Baptist Interpretations of Anabaptist History,” pp. 55-56.
11. It is also unlikely that H. J. Braun, as an MB, would have read Epp’s “Old Church Mennonite” catechism.
12. It is important to remember that Epp’s piece was contained in an addendum to his catechism intended for use among the youth of the Old Church Mennonites, not MBs. It is, however, not known to what extent the latter were familiar with it.
13. *Jubiläumsschrift*, p. 26. Johann Heinrich Kurtz did not mention Keller in his *Abriss der Kirchengeschichte. Ein Leitfaden für den Unterricht in höheren Lehranstalten* (Leipzig: August Nuemans Verlag, 13<sup>th</sup> ed. 1892). But in the expanded version of his text Kurtz described Keller’s work in a lengthy excursus. After having done so, he concluded: “And the embracing together of all the above named sects as representing one and the same spiritual current, though supported by a great many combinations, guesses, suppositions, and deductions, which from their very boldness and the confidence with which they are stated are

often startling, *seems to be utterly untenable*, and to proceed not so much from an unbiased study of the original sources as from a prejudiced judgment manipulating the facts with great art and skill. In conclusion, then, Keller proceeds to deal with the later actors in the Anabaptist movement, and finds them not only in the Mennonites and Puritans, but also in the freemason lodges, the Rosacruzians, and Pietists." J. H. Kurtz, *Church History*, trans. John Macpherson, Vol. II (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1892): 395. Clearly, even though H. J. Braun may not initially have known about the criticisms of Keller's interpretation, his teacher Lehmann must have. And J. G. Fetzer, who had initially studied under August Rauschenbusch at the Rochester Seminary, married the latter's daughter, and then gone on to study – and teach – in Germany, must assuredly have been fully aware of his father-in-law's rejection of Keller's interpretation. All of this leaves one wondering what indeed was taught on the topic at the Hamburg Baptist Seminary. Perhaps it is because of these conflicting positions and interpretations that H. J. Braun – and P. M. Friesen – were never as openly pro Keller as was David H. Epp, or Heinrich's brother Peter.

14. *FrSt*: VII, #31 (1 August, 1909): 3.
15. Lehmann, *Deutsche Baptisten*: 7-8.
16. See especially James H. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966): 276-290.
17. See my *History and Renewal*: 45-56, and 80-85.
18. Timotheus Fabri, ed., *Im Lenze der Liebe. Briefe aus dem Nachlass von Friedrich Fabri* (Berlin: Wilhelm Hertz, 1895): 76-78.
19. See Fabri's first "Gnadauer" address: Alfred Roth, *50 Jahre Gnadauer Konferenz in ihrem Zusammenhang mit der Geschichte Gnadaus* (Giessen: Brunnen Verlag, 1938): 69-70. For a much more comprehensive and nuanced account, see the relevant chapters of my *History and Renewal*.
20. See especially my "Baptist Interpretations of Anabaptist History," in Paul Toews, ed., *Mennonites and Baptists*: Chapter II.
21. See his two-part, very laudatory essay on Beck on the occasion of the latter's death in the 1905-06 *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch*, originally founded by Dirks, Sr.
22. *Personalakten*: Archiv der Vereinigten Evangelischen Mission, Barmen. Along with the personnel data, there are shorter or longer autobiographies of the following: Heinrich Dirks, Jr., *Rmg A/f9 255*; Johann Huebert, *Rmg A/f9 255*; Abraham Klassen, *Rmg A/f10 256*; Hermann Lenzmann, *Rmg A/f8 254*; Nikolai Wiebe, *Rmg A/f8 254*; Heinrich Dirks, Sr., *Rmg A/f8 254*.
23. P. M. Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*: 669.
24. For a brief description of Fabri's theology and relationship to Ludwig Keller and the German Mennonites, see my *History and Renewal*: 41-112.
25. The choice of this topic is not accidental. Lutheran Pietists were concerned not so much with the church as with the kingdom of God. See Wolfgang R. Schmidt, *Mission, Kirche und Reich bei Friedrich Fabri* (Wuppertal-Barmen: Missionshaus, 1965), and Joerg Ohlemacher, *Das Reich Gottes in Deutschland Bauen. Ein Beitrag zur Vorgeschichte und Theologie der deutschen Gemeinschaftsbewegung* (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 1986).
26. (Gnadenfeld: P. Janzen, 1892): especially pp. 21-24.
27. In a 1908 note in his *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch* (Berdiansk: H. Ediger, 1908) entitled, "Etwas aus einem Diktat des seligen Dr. Friedrich Fabri," Dirks directly attributed his interpretation of the Parable of the Tares to Fabri's classes. For a discussion of the Augustinian interpretation of the parable, see chapter III of my *Thomas Muentzer*: 53-72. On the Anabaptist view, see my *Erasmus, the Anabap-*



- tists and the Great Commission** (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).
28. At the 1925 Mennonite World Conference in Basel a Pfarrer Weissmann representing the Basel *Missionshaus* remarked: "Finally, I wish to mention the former *Predigerschule* (seminary) here in which so many Russian Mennonites received their [theological] training. It was for me a sad pleasure, at the beginning of the war, still to be able to instruct some of these brothers. It is my quiet hope that a time will once more come when Russian Mennonite sons will allow themselves to be equipped for that holy service here." *Bericht*: 16.
  29. I have also gone through the archival holdings at the Basel *Missionshaus* in search of Russian Mennonites, but found fewer than in Barmen. Then there is the Basel *Predigerschule* and the school at St. Chrischona, all of which I have investigated. It is interesting to note that Benjamin H. Unruh, along with one other student, were the last students to graduate from the Basel *Predigerschule* in 1902. From there he went on to the University of Basel to study theology.
  30. E. H. Broadbent, *The Pilgrim Church* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1955): viii.
  31. Cramp, *Baptist History*, p. 54.
  32. *Ibid*: 117.
  33. Abraham Goerz, born in Gnadenfeld in 1840, studied under F. W. Lange and later on became teacher, then in 1875 minister in Ohrloff. See "Goerz, Abraham," in the *ML*, II: 131. The author is the youngest of the Braun brothers.
  34. P. M. Friesen appears to have been more dependent upon Reiswitz & Wadzeck, *Beiträge*, who develop a similar thesis of the Waldensian origins of the Dutch Mennonites based on Van Braght's *Martyrs Mirror*. See pp. 17, 44, 133, 136 & 177.
  35. *Dokumente*.
  36. In a telling passage of the above document, we read: "His [Keller's] interpretation aroused doubts in many [readers], and many opposed him, but no one was able to challenge the accuracy of the facts he presented." Not quite the way it was. See my *History and Renewal*.
  37. David G. Rempel, "An Introduction to Russian Mennonite Historiography," *MQR*, vol. XLVIII, #4 (October, 1974): 416.
  38. "The Jumpers" is the term used throughout the government's documents dealing with the early years of the movement. Why should it have called them by that name? Perhaps a better question to ask would be: how might governmental authorities have attempted to understand what was going on in the Mennonite colonies with regard to the MB phenomenon? The answer may be: through their experiences with sectarian movements inside the Russian Orthodox Church. If this is indeed the case, such an answer to the above question could teach us a very valuable lesson about how the Tsarist government interpreted the Mennonite phenomenon, but also about how Mennonites interpreted their Russian neighbors. With regard to the term "Jumpers" applied to the schismatic – and therefore sectarian – MB movement, the Russian authorities clearly, as the name itself suggests, interpreted the break-away movement in terms of the sectarian history within the Russian Orthodox Church. For in St. Petersburg, during the reign of Alexander I (1801-1825) – not that long before the 1860 MB schism – a Russian sect was born which Alfred F. Heard, *The Russian Church and Russian Dissent* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1887): 261, described as follows:  
 "An offshoot of the Khlysti, known as the 'Shakouni,' or 'Jumpers,' openly professed debauchery and libertinism to excess, as an efficient means of conquering the flesh by exhaustion and satiety, and of hastening the moment of prophetic revelation. [Rasputin was reputed to have belonged to this sect.]

"This branch sect, which was detected at St. Petersburg during the reign of Alexander I, differs from its parent stock in the style of gymnastics adopted by its members, but also and especially in the abominable obscenities it preaches and practices as a religious duty. It is supposed to be of foreign origin, having been introduced into Russia from the Finnish provinces. Whatever may have been the intention of its founders, it has degenerated into a secret society for the encouragement of vice and sexual indulgence."

On the other hand, the term "Hüpfer" may have been applied to the new MB Church by the bishops of the Old Mennonite Church in an attempt to discredit it by association with a notorious Russian sect, thereby poisoning the minds of the governmental authorities against them. But thus far we have no conclusive evidence for either hypothesis, although the Lutheran churchman, Alexander K. Brune, who was asked by the Russian authorities to investigate the secessionist movement, stated on at least two occasions that "the Mennonites call them Hüpfer . . . ." See John B. Toews, ed., *The Story of the Early Mennonite Brethren (1860-1869). Reflections of a Lutheran Churchman* (Winnipeg, MB & Hillsboro, KS: Kindred Productions, 2002): 104 & 163. Brune's assertion is given credence by the Molotschna District Office letter of 12 October, 1860 to the Inspector of the Molotschna Mennonite Colonies where we read: "The Rudnerweide Village Office reported on the fourth day of this month (referral number 84) to the district office concerning the members of their congregation who have left their parish and joined the *Hüpfer* sect . . . ." *Ibid*: 27.

39. As late as 1961 one could read such an interpretation in a scholarly journal which published Martin Lackner's "Von Thomas Müntzer zum Münsterschen Aufstand," *Jahrbuch des Vereins für Westfälische Kirchengeschichte*, 53/54 (1960-1961): 9-24.
40. Tscherniavsky was a gubernia supervisor from Kherson, but the Ministry of Internal Affairs rejected his report as extremely biased. See *ibid*: 128 & 132.
41. P. M. Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*: 327-337.
42. The association of Anabaptists with Russian sects like the Doukhobors and, in our case with the "Jumpers," had already been made in the Russian literature. F. C. Coneybeare, for example, in his *Russian Dissenters* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962): 285, reports that some Russian authors equated the Doukhobors with the Anabaptists, arguing: ". . . it was only want of opportunity and means that prevented the Dukhobortsy from re-enacting the horrible mutinies and bloody disputes which characterized the rising of the similar sect of Anabaptists in Westphalia." What our inspector Tscherniavsky appears to have done, therefore, is to have proceeded, in his interrogation, with the recent Russian sectarian movement of the "Jumpers" and its possible association with Münsterite Anabaptism in mind and asked his questions accordingly. Gradually, however, after considerable investigation of the movement by the government through local Lutheran officials, it rejected – or at least discontinued – the use of the term "Jumpers" and granted the MB Church full status as a Mennonite church body with all the rights that entailed.
43. *Ibid*: 338.
44. On Tscherniavsky, see the statements in Toews, *Early Beginnings*: 90 - 93.
45. P. M. Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*: 120. As privy councilor, Klaus would have ranked third from the top in the civil service "Table of Ranks," a fairly exalted position. See Basil Dmytryshyn, ed., *Imperial Russia. A Source Book, 1700-1917*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Harcourt Brace, 1996): 19.
46. Rempel, "Mennonite Historiography": 416.

47. Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: a History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1997): 39.
48. On Wilhelm Zimmermann see the following of my studies: *Reformation and Utopia: the Marxist Interpretation of the Reformation and its Antecedents* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1974); "The Marxist Interpretation of Anabaptism," Carl S. Meyer, ed., *Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies*, vol. I (St. Louis: Foundation for Reformation Research, 1970): 17-34; "The Marxist Interpretation of the Reformation," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, vol. 64 (1973): 34-55; "Wilhelm Zimmermann and the Interpretation of Anabaptism," in Harry Loewen, ed., *Mennonite Images* (Winnipeg: Hyperion Press, 1980): 33-49; "Wilhelm Zimmermann and the Nemesis of History," *German Studies Review*, 4, #2 (1981): 195-236; and "Wilhelm Zimmermann and Friedrich Engels: Two Sources of the Marxist Interpretation of Anabaptism," *MQR*, vol. LV, #3 (July, 1981): 240-254.
49. On Müntzer, see my *Thomas Muentzer, Destroyer of the Godless: The Making of a Sixteenth Century Religious Revolutionary* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990).
50. At the 1848 Frankfurt Parliament where Zimmermann was a leading member of the left wing republican faction, he was known as "der Bauernkriegs Zimmermann" (the Peasants' War Zimmermann).
51. Klaus, *Unsere Kolonien*: 164.
52. *Ibid*: 165.
53. It was precisely this argument, according to Martin Klaassen, that was used by the Prussian government to justify its denial of military exemption to Mennonites there. Klaassen, *Wehrlose Taufgesinnnte*: 270-275.
54. (Danzig: Edwin Groening, 1873)
55. Klaassen, *Wehrlose Taufgesinnnte*: ii-iii. This passage alone makes it apparent that Klaassen and his sponsors were not merely concerned with the issue of military exemption. They appear also to have been arguing against Klaus' interpretation of Anabaptist origins.
56. Whether Klaassen was consciously aware of Klaus' intellectual orientation or not, he was adamantly opposed to the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, saying on one occasion: "As the result of the anti-Christian teachings of a Rousseau, a Voltaire and others, those storms, arising from the dark abyss, broke out in France already more than half a century ago. Moving from place to place since then they have, over a considerable period of time, stripped Western monarchs of their God-given plenitude of power and reduced their positions to little more than a weak reflection of an earlier luster attributed to the name and title of king that had still been allowed them by an increasingly proud and assertive populace forcing its way into power. These were the revolutionary storms that erupted in France in 1789." Klaassen, *Wehrlose Taufgesinnnte*: 276-277.
57. See also Walter Klaassen, "A Belated Review," *MQR*, 49 (January, 1975): 43-52.
58. Klaassen, *Wehrlose Taufgesinnnte*: 270. On page 169, Klaassen wrote: "Even more damaging mischief was perpetrated in the year 1534 by a pair of such fanatical enthusiasts and their followers from Holland. These were Jan Bockold, called Jan of Leyden, a tailor by trade, and Jan Matthys, a baker from Haarlem. The nonsensical teachings of Müntzer [Klaassen obviously did not accept Zimmermann's or Klaus' interpretation] had been carried even to Holland by some of his escaped followers where they added teachings on community of goods and universal equality."
59. See my "Baptist Interpretations of Anabaptist History."
60. John Newton Brown, *Das Leben und Zeitalter Menno's, des berühmten hol-*

- ländischen Reformators*, translated from the English (Philadelphia: Amerikanische Baptisten Publikationsgesellschaft, 1854). The English edition was published one year earlier by the same publisher. Even a Dutch translation appeared, but without a date.
61. "Remembering anew the small flock of his true warriors, the Lord therefore raised a new refuge and support amongst them in the area of the ancient evangelical confession concerning patience. This was Peter Waldo of Lyons." Klaassen, *Wehrlose Taufgesinnte*: 132.
  62. "It had been with pleasure that the remnants of the old Anabaptists had therefore greeted the appearance of Wessel, Faber, Erasmus, Reuchlin and others. But it was in Menno that the Great Shepherd provided his small flock with the instrument that was, not only partially but totally, to cleanse the old apostolic teaching and set it shining as a beacon. He was the one to raise high aloft and carry forward this banner of the cross inscribed with the call to patience." *Ibid*: 185.
  63. *Ibid*: 289.
  64. *Ibid*: 308-309.
  65. In 1908 Hinrich van der Smissen, Hamburg Mennonite pastor and editor of the *Mennonitische Blätter* entered an essay into its pages entitled: "Kräftige Irrtümer" in which Münster and Klaus Epp's trek to Central Asia are clearly brought together. In Germany van der Smissen could broach the subject; in Russia it was too problematic. And Mennonites have had a long history of trying to avoid the problematic in their past. *MBI*, #8 (August, 1908): 63-65.
  66. In the same "Postscript" Klaassen wrote: "In the hidden, though for the correctly hearing ear evermore distinct threats of, and calls to war in the midst of the most profound peace, during which the Christian nations are arming themselves to the teeth in preparation, perhaps, to prosecute the last great battles of the end times in the not-too-distant future, the government of this land has deemed it necessary to expand its military power accordingly, to this end passing the appropriate extension to the existing laws." *Ibid*: 307.
  67. See Walter Klaassen's "Belated Review," and Fred Richard Belk, *The Great Trek of the Russian Mennonites to Central Asia 1880-1884* (Scottsdale, PA.: Herald Press, 1976).
  68. In the opening conference address at the 1925 Basel Mennonite World Conference, Jacob Kroeker, former associate editor of the *Friedensstimme* until 1910 and thoroughly familiar with Russian Mennonite conditions, in fact brought these two aspects together, stating: "With an attitude like this adopted to the world our fathers combined, in their salvation experience, a very strongly marked expectation of the end times. This chapter is perhaps, in certain of its expressions, the darkest one in the history of our ancestors. At times this chiliastic expectation, in individuals and at times entire groups, took on forms that had nothing to do with a healthy, sober expectation of the coming kingly reign of Jesus Christ on earth. All of us know, for example, how, at the beginning of the 1880s, many hundreds of our brothers and sisters sold and left their beautiful farms and houses in the South Russian and Volga District colonies in order to move to Turkestan in Central Asia. There they hoped to find a place of refuge during the Great Tribulation foretold in Revelation, a tribulation their spirit told them would take place in the near future of world affairs . . . ." *Bericht*: 30. Though Kroeker does not mention Münster, the reference is unmistakable.
  69. Epp, *Erklärungen u. Erläuterungen*: 162.
  70. *Ibid*: 166. See also p. 164 on "second baptisms."
  71. *Ibid*: 259.

72. Epp, *Erklärungen u. Erläuterungen*: 259-260.
73. *Ibid*: 260-276.
74. On Keller, Denck and Menno see my chapter "Ludwig Keller, Hans Denck and the German Mennonites," in my *History and Renewal*: 41-77.
75. See my *History and Renewal*: 78 - 83.
76. Epp, *Erklärungen u. Erläuterungen*: 275. The section dealing with the Munsterites is considerable given the 259-293 pages of the essay - going from 270-276 - which includes the story of the Mennonite migration to Russia.
77. *Ibid*: 276.
78. Berend Karl Roosen, *Menno Symons den Mennoniten Gemeinden geschildert* (Milford Square, PA: J. G. Stauffer, 1874). This was the first American printing.
79. *Ibid*: 12. See Epp's direct attribution to Roosen on pages 277, 279, 290. It is obvious that the entire section - pages 276-283 - is taken directly from Roosen.
80. *Erklärungen u. Erläuterungen*: 280.
81. *Ibid*: 278-279.
82. "Reisebericht und Bittschriften in Angelegenheit der Wehrlosigkeit der Mennoniten in Russland in den siebenziger Jahren des vorigen Jahrhunderts," II, *FrSt*, IX, # 11 (9 February, 1911): 5.
83. If the minister did not know of it, his successors could have read all about it in the fall of 1893 in *Vedomsti*. See Klippenstein, *Mennonite Pacifism*: 121-122.
84. *Dokumente*.
85. By the time of the 1912 Nikolaipol General Conference, it had become very clear that the attempt to label the Mennonites a sect by the Tsarist government had an ulterior motive, for there it was announced: "On 1 February, [1912], we received a dreadful scare: Newspaper telegrams proclaimed that the Assistant to the Minister, Lykoshin, had pointed out in the Duma that the laws regarding military [or non-military] service of the sectarians should be subjected to a thorough review. But the answers to the telegrams directed to the Duma representatives Bergmann and Kamensky by our delegates quieted our unrest.  
 "The telegrams of 8 and 9 March, however, brought new and disturbing news. The Duma had rejected Kamensky's amendments which advocated that Russian sectarians serve twice the ordinary length of time, but in non-combatant capacities. Instead, it adopted Baratynsky's recommendation . . . ." Report on the conference, *Bt*, VII, #84 (26 October, 1912): 4. It was in response to this threat that the conference commissioned the 1912 "Origin of the Mennonites" to be written opposing the government's inclusion of the Mennonites among Russia's sects.
86. In his 1912 review of Friesen's history, H. van der Smitten noted Keller's absence as well. He put it this way: "Those of us from the German branch of the Mennonites will not be pleased by everything [in Friesen's history] - nor to an equal extent. The closely related Prussian [Mennonites], from whom the Russians are descended and whose principle characteristics they have brought with them, may be an exception; the rest of us cannot really appreciate the peculiarities of this book.  
 "That is connected to the fact that Br. Friesen, as he has himself stated, has paid no heed to Keller's important researches; he didn't have the space, the learned apparatus, and therefore also the courage to do so. As a consequence, the essential Mennonite type for him is a mixture of the Dutch and the Russian."  
 "Was können wir aus P. Friesens Geschichte lernen," *MBI*, #11 (November, 1912): 93-84, p. 83.
87. See note on p. 24 of "Zur Geschichte der Entstehung der Mennoniten."
88. *Ibid*: 27.

89. *Ibid*: 29.
90. We will treat this document more fully in the chapters on the "sectarian" controversy.
91. Peter Braun, *Who are the Mennonites?*: 2.
92. It is important in this context to reassert the fact that at least the Russian Mennonite leaders were fully aware of what was being written in the pages of that paper. At least since 1860, when the discussion regarding the MB schism, and many of the documents relating to it, were printed in its pages, it must have been fairly widely read in Russian Mennonite circles.
93. Hinrich van der Smitten, "Abriss der Geschichte der Mennoniten," *MBI*, #1 (January, 1903): 29.
94. See Christian Neff, "Koehler, Walter," *ML*, vol. II (Frankfurt/M. & Weierhof/Pfalz: Selbstverlag, 1939): 518.
95. Walter Koehler, review of Ernst Weydmann, *Geschichte der Mennoniten*, in: *MBI*, #2 (February, 1906): 38. In a subsequent passage Koehler pointed to the fact that this theory was simply a Mennonite version of the Roman Catholic theory of apostolic succession. Mennonites, therefore, were not alone in holding to such a succession.
96. H. van der Smitten, "Material zur Geschichte des Münsterschen Aufruhrs," *MBI*, #3 (March, 1905): 20. Karl Vos' 1914 biography of Menno sought to establish the connection even more firmly. Whether Russian Mennonites saw the book before the war is doubtful, however. See van der Smitten's review in the *MBI*, #8 (August, 1914): 58-59.
97. *FrSt*, #9 (2 February, 1911): 2-3; #10 (5 February, 1911): 2-3.
98. See my *History and Renewal*: 113-146, especially 132-135.
99. One wonders why it took so long to reproduce a very favorable piece on the Russian Mennonites in a Russian Mennonite paper. That it appeared precisely at this time would seem to indicate that it was considered to have some relevance to the defense of their military exemption privileges.
100. "Die Mennoniten in Russland," *FrSt*, #55 (20 July, 1911): 3.
101. Peter Braun, *Kto takie Mennonity?* pp. 5-6. In a footnote to the above, Braun focused solely on Keller's importance for this interpretation, saying: "Especially the research and writing of Ludwig Keller, the former archivist of the city of Münster, has contributed to the clarification of these important questions; they shed light on the question of the origin of these Old Evangelical Congregations, to which also the Mennonites belong. Without any exaggeration whatsoever it can be asserted, on the basis of his research, **that the doctrine adhered to by the Mennonites existed in the general Christian church well before the Lutheran or Reformed; on this basis alone she has the right to full recognition as an historically independent entity** [my emphasis]. Many doubted the validity of Keller's arguments, and a good many opposed him, **but no one was able to disprove the validity of his conclusions since they were based upon innumerable documents and unimpeachable sources** [my emphasis]. He presented the results of his historical research in a series of scholarly studies [there follows a full citation]. . . Dr. Keller's interpretation of the origin of Mennonite doctrine is shared fully by Prof. Wedel, who cites them in his 'History of the Mennonites.' Newton, Kansas, North America 1900-1904."
102. "To the Mennonite Congregations in Russia," June, 1917: *J. R. Voth Papers*, MLA.
103. Cornelius Bergmann, *Die Täuferbewegung im Kanton Zürich* (Leipzig: M. Heinsius Nachfolger, 1916), 176pp. I have not been able to determine whether he was

- a son of H. A. Bergmann, the Duma representative. On the latter see the article in the *ME*.
104. *Ibid*: 14.
  105. B. H. Unruh, "Die Revolution 1525 und das Täuferturn," Chr. Neff, ed., *Gedenkschrift zum 400 Jährigen Jubiläum der Mennoniten oder Taufgesinnten* (Ludwigshafen: Konferenz der Süddeutschen Mennoniten, 1925): 19-47. Within a few years, in 1927, he even published a sizable booklet on the Russian Revolution with the same title.
  106. For example: "A more profound immersion in the Anabaptist documents would have led especially [Karl] Holl to see an absolutely amazing elective affinity (congeniality) between Luther and the pacific Anabaptists. In any case, in the above instance the scholarly furrow was not set deeply enough." "Revolution und Täuferturn": 37.
  107. *Ibid*: 42.
  108. Karl Lindeman, *Von den deutschen Kolonisten in Russland*: 34.
  109. Adolf Ehrst, *Die Mennoniten in Russland von seiner Einwanderung bis zur Gegenwart* Berlin/Leipzig: Verlag Julius Beltz, 1932): 1-2.
  110. B. B. Janz, "Die Herkunft der Mennoniten Russlands," *B. B. Janz Papers*, Folder 152.
  111. Among the B. B. Janz Papers.
  112. See my "J. B. Toews: The Theologian as Historian," *Direction*, vol. I, No. 2 (Fall 1997): 43-45. Even Peter P. Klassen, *Die Mennoniten in Paraguay* (2001), while not citing Keller directly, leaves the question of origins open but then continues to talk of "die altevangelische Lehre," (the old-evangelical teaching) – Keller's language, pp. 374-377.
  113. Klassen, *Die Mennoniten in Paraguay*: 57.

## CHAPTER 5

1. Peter Waldron, "Religious Toleration in Late Imperial Russia," in Olga Crisp & Linda Edmondson, eds., *Civil Rights in Imperial Russia*: 102-119, writes: "There was a triangular relationship between the government, religious minorities, and the Orthodox Church due to the Church's special position within the empire. The legal status of the Orthodox Church was defined in Russia's Fundamental Laws as being pre-eminent and predominant, and was effectively the Established Church of the Russian Empire," pp. 104-105. Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, *The Empire of the Tsars and the Russians*, vol. III, *The Religion* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902), trans. by Zenaide A. Ragozin, also emphasizes, on numerous occasions, that it was also the *national* church, that is, that nation and religion – Russia and Orthodoxy – were deemed to be two inseparable parts of a greater whole. He also argues, however, that since members of the Orthodox faith were forbidden to leave the church, not even they had complete religious freedom. See also Paul W. Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy: Missions, Governance, and Confessional Parties in Russia's Volga-Kama Region, 1827-1905* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2002), 40: "The Orthodox Church retained a monopoly on the right to proselytize, and the toleration of non-Orthodox faiths was always limited."
2. Leroy-Beaulieu, who wrote in the late nineteenth century, was one of only a handful of historians to treat these foreign confessions. But even he does not deal with the government's relationship to them. See, for example, Daniel T. Orlovsky, *The*

*Limits of Reform: The Ministry of Internal Affairs in Imperial Russia, 1802-1881* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), but also Cornelius Krahn, "Government of Mennonites in Russia," *ME*, II, 556-557. According to John Shelton Curtiss, *Church and State in Russia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940): 29, a Department of Religious Affairs was first created in 1817 by Alexander I. He states: "The Synod as well as the administration of non-Orthodox faiths, was under this ministry. The department lost control over the Synod in 1824, however, and was subsequently abolished as 'an independent entity,' coming under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. When that happened, the Over Procurator, as director of the Synod, received the status of a minister and joined the Council of Ministers, giving him direct access to the tsar to whom alone he reported."

3. Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy*: 14.
4. Count Witte, president of the Council of Ministers at the time and the principal promoter of religious toleration for all, observed in his *Memoirs*: 141: "The [ministerial] committee agreed unanimously on an interpretation of religious toleration that was in keeping with the spirit of the times as well as in keeping with the spirit of genuine Christianity. *This would mean the end of governmental supervision of any faith but the Orthodox one* and the elimination of police intervention in the operations of the church" [my emphasis]. Antonin, the Patriarch of St. Petersburg consulted by the ministers, wished even the Orthodox Church freed from all state control, but Pobedonostsev was opposed. In spite of the Over Procurator's opposition and the removal of the discussion on the Church to the Synod, however, the latter voted to call for a *sobor* (church council) to restore the Patriarchate and, hence, also the freedom of the Church. But a council was never called by the Tsar and so the Church's relationship to the State remained what it had been.
5. Not until the Bolsheviks came to power in 1917 did the separation of Church and State become a reality in Russia. But then separation turned out to be a mere prelude to the attempt to exterminate the church completely.
6. See, for example, James Cracraft, *The Church Reform of Peter the Great* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1971), esp. p. 162. Cracraft's study is informed by this older literature.
7. G. L. Freeze, "Handmaiden of the State? The Church in Imperial Russia reconsidered," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 36, No. 1 (January, 1985): 89-90.
8. Dimitrij Tschizewskij, *Russian Intellectual History*, trans. from the German by John C. Osborne (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1978), Part II: 140-141.
9. Cracraft, *Church Reform*: 8-16.
10. Quoted in Cracraft: *Church Reform*: 72. See also Igor Smolitsch, *Geschichte der Russischen Kirche 1700-1917* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964): 130-132.
11. See James H. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe*: 58; Sergius Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church* (np, 1935); and Nicolas Zernov, *Moscow the Third Rome* (New York: AMS Press, 1937).
12. Reinhard Wittram, *Peter I Czar und Kaiser: Zur Geschichte Peters des Grossen in seiner Zeit* (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), vol. II: 176-177.
13. See Tschizewskij, *Russian Intellectual History*: 146; and Joan Haslip, *Catherine the Great* (New York: International Collectors Library, 1977): 33.
14. Quoted in Cracraft: *Church Reform*: 15.
15. Tschizewskij, *Russian Intellectual History*: 141-142.
16. On these policies, see Roger Bartlett, "Her Imperial Majesty's Director and Curator of the Mennonite Colonies in Russia: Three Letters of George Trappe," *J MS* (1994), vol. 12: 48-52.



17. See Hans Brandenburg, *The Meek and the Mighty; The Emergence of the Evangelical Movement in Russia* (London & Oxford: Mowbrays, 1976): 19.
18. The Western influence on this Russian revolutionary tradition was confirmed by Alexander Herzen, the leader of the next generation of Russian revolutionaries when he observed: "The heritage we received from the Decembrists was the awakened feeling of human dignity, the striving for independence, the hatred of slavery, the respect for Western Europe and for the Revolution, the faith in the possibility of an upheaval in Russia, and the passionate desire to take part in it . . ."
19. This was also the year of the Gnadenfeld settlement, the last large Mennonite immigrant settlement for years to come.
20. W. J. L. Leatherbarrow & D. C. Offord, eds., *A Documentary History of Russian Thought. From the Enlightenment to Marxism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1987): 62-63.
21. Nicholas B. Breyfogle, "Heretics and Colonizers: Religious Dissent and Russian Colonization of Transcaucasia, 1830 - 1890" (University of Pennsylvania, 1998): viii.
22. This appears even to have been the opinion of the Tatars and other non-Orthodox groups in the Volga-Kama region according to Paul W. Werth. See *At the Margins of Orthodoxy*: 125-146.
23. Quoted in Billington, *The Icon and the Axe*: 18 See also Nicolas Zernov, *The Third Rome*.
24. See Nicolas Zernov, *The Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963): 130-164.
25. Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*: 18, 19.
26. Zernov, *Religious Renaissance*: 62.
27. Robert F. Byrnes, *Pobedonostsev, His Life and Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968): 268. Pobedonostsev's history, however, was a largely plagiarized abbreviation of the 1883 two-volume history of the Church by Alexandra N. Bakhmetev.
28. Leroy-Beaulieu, *Empire of the Tsars, III*: 78. In another place Leroy-Beaulieu states: "One is tempted to draw a parallel in this respect between the Russian form of government and that of the Hebrews, who under both their judges and their kings, believed themselves to be ruled by God and the Divine Law. The parallel fits all the better that the Russians also have for centuries been in the habit of regarding themselves as the chosen people, God's own people, and have for their sovereign a feeling much akin to that of the Hebrews for their kings David and Solomon . . ." *Ibid*: 49-50.
29. Zernov, *Religious Renaissance*: 45.
30. The 1912 document probably written by David H. Epp and submitted to the Russian government and Duma entitled: "Mennonites in Russia," would appear to indicate that they might have. For there it is stated: "We Mennonites accept the fact that we recognize ourselves as the only true denomination, the true church of the apostles. However, at the same time we recognize that all other Christian denominations have the truth and are all part of universal Christianity. According to I John 4: 2 & 3, any spirit that recognizes 'Christ who came in the flesh, is from God.' Therefore we do not proselytize among other Christian denominations because they also have the truth. The differences in ritual and tradition with other denominations we regard as secondary. We therefore recognize the One and Only Universal Church that is made up of believers from all denominations," p.24.
31. Frank C. Thiessen, *P. M. Friesen, 1849-1914* (Winnipeg: Christian Press, 1974): 13.

32. Prince Serge Wolkonsky, *My Reminiscences*, vol. II (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1924): 24-25, translated by A. E. Chamot.
33. See Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy*: 177-199.
34. *Ibid*: 20.
35. Michael Klimenko, *Anfänge des Baptismus in Südrussland (Ukraine) nach offiziellen Quellen* (Erlangen, 1957): 60, writes: "The Russian government was indifferent to the apostasy of non-Orthodox believers and the spread of heresy in their ranks; and yet the slightest deviation from the faith by a member of the Orthodox Church was deemed impermissible."
36. Wolkonsky, *Reminiscences*: 29.
37. Byrnes, *Pobedonostsev*: 345, states that Anatole Leroy-Beaudieu also called him "the Russian Torquemada."
38. Wolkonsky, *Reminiscences*: 32.
39. Byrnes, *Pobedonostsev*: 165.
40. *Ibid*: 178.
41. See note # 68 of chapter 9 on land liquidation.
42. A. N. Ipatov, *Wer Sind die Mennoniten?* (Alma-Ata: Verlag Kasachstan, 1977): 69.
43. *Ibid*: 179.
44. *Ibid*: 250.
45. *Ibid*: 181-182.
46. *Ibid*: 240.
47. *Ibid*: 321.
48. The manifesto was very general and specific laws had to be enacted subsequent to its promulgation in order to establish the principle enunciated. It was here that the rub was to come, for nearly immediately the manifesto had been issued – some historians even argue that Nicholas II never intended to fulfill the promises made – the imperial government began to back away from its commitment.
49. See especially Byrnes, *Pobedonostsev*: 364-367; and Ascher, *Stolypin*: 321. The latter writes: "... In April of that year [1905], Tsar Nicholas issued a decree granting religious toleration that specifically permitted citizens to convert from one Christian creed to another without penalty. In what was to become the Kholm province, many thousands, amounting perhaps to 168,000 people, most of them former Uniates, left Orthodoxy for Catholicism. It was a great shock to the Russian authorities and to the Orthodox Bishop Evlogii, who on 2 May, 1905, sent an alarming telegram to K. P. Pobedonostsev, the procurator of the Most Holy Synod: 'The Orthodox Russian cause is perishing.'"
50. What makes this debate between Braun and Epp all the more interesting is the fact that the former was an MB and the latter belonged to the Old Church, and that they were both already – or were about to become – members of the very influential *Kommission für kirchliche Angelegenheiten*.
51. On this subject, which is too complex to enter into here, see the following: P. M. Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*; A. H. Unruh, *Die Geschichte der Mennoniten Brüdergemeinde* (Winnipeg: Christian Press, 1952); Abraham Friesen, ed., *P. M. Friesen & His History: Understanding Mennonite Brethren Beginnings* (Fresno, CA: Center for M. B. Studies, 1978); Jacob P. Bekker, *The Origin of the Mennonite Brethren Church*, trans. by D. E. Pauls & A. E. Janzen (Hillsboro, KS: The Mennonite Brethren Historical Society of the Midwest, 1973); and now John B. Toews, ed., *The Story of the Early Mennonite Brethren (1860-69): A Documentary Supplement* (Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 2001).
52. There is no good English equivalent for the term "Älteste" used in the Mennonite context. Perhaps "bishop" would come closest to describing his role in the

- church, and so that term will be used hereafter.
53. P. M. Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*: 245. See also the "Memorandum" written by Gerhard Wieler at the time, where the author stated: "In 1862, however, I was falsely charged by Mennonites of the Chortitz district before local and Russian authorities to the effect that I and others of my brethren in the faith are promoters of sects, that we are harmful to the Mennonite community, and that we have forsaken the Mennonite confession of faith. . . ." Becker, *Origin*: 142. This whole issue of the "sectarian" nature of the MB Church, expanded to the Mennonites as such in 1907, seems already in 1873 to have been tied to the Mennonite exemption from military service. If MBs were Baptists, their exemption was gone; so, too, if they could be declared a sect. In 1860 this was not yet an issue for the Tsarist government. But by 1874 and the universal conscription law it had become an issue.
  54. The 1860 schism is a somewhat ticklish problem: were MBs merely forming an independent Mennonite congregation – like the *Kleine Gemeinde* earlier – or were they actually separating themselves from the Old Church?
  55. P. M. Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*: 245.
  56. Bishop Johann Harder reported on 12 November, 1862: "The October 11, 1862 conference of municipal leaders in the Area Administrative Office regarding the matter of the Mennonites who seceded from the decadent churches, advanced the alternatives that either these people will have their colonial status rescinded and be exiled or they will have to be recognized as a church with rights similar to those of other Mennonite churches in the future . . . ." *Ibid*: 254.
  57. See the fig.: Circular of the Chortitza Area Administrative Office, 28 February, 1862 (Friesen: 312-313); Bishop Lenzmann's letter to H. G. Mannhardt, Danzig, published in the *MBI*, 1863 (Friesen: 376-384); for some of the more explicit attempts.
  58. Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*: 254. According to Harms, *Brüdergemeinde*: 15, this was precisely the approach employed by the MBs in their negotiations with the St. Petersburg authorities. He states: "The erstwhile Odessa Privy Councillor, who was familiar with the Mennonites and their customs, examined Br. Claassen's papers and said: 'Your counter-declaration with its 22 signatures indicates that you are not creating a new religious society, but that, as Mennonites, you intend to abide by the confession of your fathers – and that is permissible [by law] and you are free to *reform* your congregation . . . .'"
  59. Apparently with the help of very sage advice from German Baptists living in the capital city at the time; see especially Bekker, *Origin*: 67-68.
  60. This argument is to be found throughout the central government's documents and examples will be cited from time to time. Perhaps, therefore, Mennonite – especially MB – historians have given Claassen too much credit in the 1860 split. For the St. Petersburg archives contain materials that indicate that long before the schism in the Russian Mennonite Church, the Tsarist government had been forced to grapple with the Dukhobor break from the Russian Orthodox Church. There it had learned that "persecuting" a splinter group only made a martyr of it and drew greater attention to it and, perhaps, also a greater following. Even the government's Lutheran consultant – Brune – in the matter made the same suggestion. The Dukhobor example appears to have been a particularly telling one for the Tsar at least, if not for all government officials. But, as historians of Russian dissent to the Orthodox Church tell us, the Dukhobors and a number of other sects were pacifists and refused military service. The government persecuted them mercilessly because of this, so much so that eventually a sizeable group of Dukhobors

- migrated to Canada. The experience with the Dukhobors led the government gradually to realize that persecution was counter-productive in that it only made martyrs of the sect, but it never did grant them and other pacifist sects exemption from military service. The similarity between Mennonites (not only MBs) and the Russian sects in this regard, especially after 1873 and the universal military conscription law, may have inspired the government to change the Mennonite status from that of a confession to that of a sect, thereby automatically rescinding their exemption from military service. On these sects and their pacifism, see F. C. Conebeare, *Russian Dissenters*: 261-370, but especially 283-285, and 313-315.
61. Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*: 258-260. Brune and the Russian government accepted the argument of widespread corruption among the Russian Mennonites and that MBs wished simply to return to Menno and the purity of the early *Taufgesinnte*. See John B. Toews, *Early Mennonite Brethren*: 7.
  62. On Alexander I's religious perspective, see Billington, *The Icon and the Axe*: 269-296.
  63. On this entire phenomenon, now see Sergei I. Zhuk, *Russia's Lost Reformation*.
  64. See Ed. Kriele, *Geschichte der Rheinischen Mission*, 2 vols. (Barmen: Missionsshaus, 1928).
  65. See Wilhelm Schlatter, *Geschichte der Basler Mission 1815-1915*, 3 vols. (Basel, 1916).
  66. On Bonekemper, Wuest and the *Stundist* movement, see the following: Walde-mar Gutsche, *Westliche Quellen des russischen Stundismus* (Kassel: J. G. Oncken Verlag, 1956); Hans Brandenburg, *The Meek and the Mighty*; R. S. Latimer, *Under Three Tsars: Liberty of Conscience in Russia* (London: Morgan & Scott Ltd., 1901); Heinrich Loewen, jr., *Russische Freikirche: Die Geschichte der Evangeliumschrsten und Baptisten bis 1944* (Bonn: Verlag fuer Kultur und Wissenschaft, 1995); Wilhelm Kahle, *Evangelische Christen in Russland und der Sowetunion* (Wuppertal & Kassel: Oncken Verlag, 1978); Andrew Blane, "Protestant Sects in Late Imperial Russia," in Andrew Blane, ed., *The Religious World of Russian Culture*, vol. II, *Russia and Orthodoxy* (The Hague & Paris: Mouton, 1975); Edmund Heier, *Religious Schism in the Russian Aristocracy 1860-1900: Radstockism and Pashkovism* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970); A. I. Klibanov, *History of Religious Sectarianism in Russia*, trans. by Ethel Dunn (Oxford, etc.: Pergamon Press, 1982); and I. S. Prokhanov, *In the Cauldron of Russia, 1869-1933* (New York: All-Russian Evangelical Christian Union, 1933).
  67. Gutsche, *Westliche Quellen*: 19. Harms, *Brüdergemeinde*: 4, would appear to agree, stating: "Wuest's concept of the separation of believers from unbelievers along with his exuberant doctrine of justification were what characterized the new Mennonite Brethren Church."
  68. The emancipation of the peasants in 1861 appears to have begun to break down the barriers between German and Mennonite colonists and their Russian neighbors, for now Russian peasants, freed from the control of their noble landlords, were at liberty to supplement their incomes by working seasonally for their more affluent German and Mennonite neighbors. There they came in touch with the new religious ideas as well as new agricultural methods. As a result, the revivals spilled over into the Russian villages, an accompaniment of emancipation the government neither foresaw nor desired. See also Kroeker, *Ein Reiches Leben*: 37.
  69. *Ibid*: 48; and Brandenburg, *The Meek*: 54-55.
  70. Gutsche, like virtually every other "evangelical" writer, asserts that the birth of the Mennonite Brethren Church under the influence of Wuest led essentially to the creation of another "Korntal Brüdergemeine" (Korntal being a suburb of

Stuttgart where the pietistic revivals had led to the creation of a separatist church). Only later did these Mennonites turn to the writings of Menno and the Baptists. *Ibid*: 34-36. Brandenburg even calls the new Mennonite church a "secret source of Stundism." *The Meek*: 22-23.

71. Becker, *Origin*: 68-69, writes: "After receiving this advice, Claassen contacted certain officials who were Baptists from whom he received information **and a booklet on baptism by immersion**. . . ." This booklet on baptism became normative when the first baptisms were performed, although Bekker and the others had first to find justification for immersion baptism in Menno Simons' "Basic Fundamentals" before they felt comfortable about it. See pp. 71-73. Harms, *Brüdergemeinde*: 19-20, is in full agreement with this, with perhaps an even greater emphasis on Baptist baptism literature.
72. Gutsche, *Westliche Quellen*: 50. See also Brandenburg, *The Meek*: 80-81, and the statement by V. G. Pavlov, "The Rise, Growth and Present Position of the Baptist Body in Russia," quoted in Blane, "Protestant Sects," p. 272: "In the German colony of Alt-Danzig, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of June, 1869, thirty residents were baptized by a new Mennonite [MB] pastor from the German colony of Kishka – one Abraham Unger who, in the discharge of his spiritual duties, had been brought much into the company of . . . J. G. Oncken. A converted Russian – a peasant named Efim Tsimbal, from the village of Karlovka – had contrived, known though he was to the German brethren, to introduce himself among the candidates on this occasion, and so received baptism with the rest. This man, a little while later, baptized Riaboshapka, who, in his turn administered the ordinance to Michael Ratushniji, and thus it was that the believers in little Russia [Ukraine] received baptism from the German brethren." Klimenko, *Anfänge des Baptismus*: 63, rejects the notion that Unger did not know whom he was baptizing. Harms, *Brüdergemeinde*: 39-40, confirms this, arguing that Unger had been invited by a group of German Baptists from "Alt-Danzig" near Odessa to conduct a baptismal service for them. It was at this occasion that Efim Tsimbal intruded himself into the ranks of those who wished to be baptized. By the time Unger recognize he had a Russian before him, it was too late.
73. Paul D. Steeves, "The Russian Baptist Union, 1917-1935: Evangelical Awakening in Russia," (University of Kansas Ph. D. dissertation, 1976): 471-473, narrates an incident in which a Russian Baptist leader by the name of Shipkov and a Russian Orthodox cleric were debating the apostolic legitimacy of the Baptist Church in Russia. In the course of making his case for the apostolic succession of the Russian Baptists, Shipkov asked the cleric: "From which apostle did the succession of the Orthodox clergy come to Russia?"  
 "From the Apostle Andrew," the priest replied.  
 "And which, in your opinion, was the chief apostle of the twelve?" [Shipkov asked].  
 "Peter," [the priest answered].  
 "Well, you know," [Shipkov answered], the succession of our presbyters is superior to that of the Orthodox bishops: it comes from the Apostle Peter, and yours from the Apostle Andrew."  
 "This cannot be," the priest responded. "How is it so?"  
 "Very simple. The first Baptist preachers in Russia received ordination to presbyter rights from Mennonite preacher-presbyters, and the Mennonites have their ordination as preachers from the reformer, Menno Simons himself, who, before his conversion, was a Catholic priest, and the Catholics received their hierarchy from the Apostle Peter. . . ."

- Shipkov apparently was not told of Keller's interpretation of Anabaptist/Mennonite history. But then, as his answer makes apparent, there are multiple ways of creating an apostolic succession.
74. According to Gutsche, Abraham Unger of Einlage wrote about the origins of the movement: "The establishment of our church was the result of the conviction that came upon us, derived both from the Word of God, our exchange of letters with Brother Oncken of Hamburg, and the reading of the *Missionsblatt* [a German Baptist periodical], that the baptism of believers was the central teaching of the Scriptures." *Westliche Quellen*: 36.
  75. Quoted in Gutsche, *Westliche Quellen*: 37. According to Harms, *Brüdergemeinde*: 59-62, Liebig remained in Russia from 1866 to about 1875 and continued to serve the new MB Church, presiding at its annual conferences and serving the Mennonite Brethren in many other ways.
  76. This is also the argument of Klimenko, *Anfänge des Baptismus*: 157. Others, like Brandenburg, *The Meek*: 23, who calls the Mennonite Brethren "a secret source of Stundism," emphasizes their "missionary" activity [p. 48] and support of the *Stundists* [p. 90]. Still others like Gutsche and Klimenko – even Andrew Blane – stress the MB importance to, and in, the early stages of this development. Even Leroy-Beaulieu, *Empire of the Tsars*, III: 453, who devotes only one footnote to the Russian Mennonites (p. 530), states: "The cradle of *Stundism* thus appears to be Raslopol, a village contiguous to that of Rohrbach. The peasant Michael Ratushny, who is regarded as the founder of the Russian *Stunda*, adopted the tenets of the Anabaptists or Mennonites, enjoining on his adult proselytes a second baptism."
  77. Speaking of this relationship, Jacob Kroeker's wife wrote: "Much greater and more profound blessings resulted from the activity of those men and women who went forth from the congregations and proclaimed the Gospel in the name of Jesus and the powerful faith of their forefathers. In this way they passed on the faith so that it did not all remain in their own congregations, but went far beyond their confines to initiate revivals and create movements throughout Russia. The renewal movement among the Mennonites, especially through those uniquely called, had a fructifying (very beneficial) effect upon the life and development of the Russian Stundists, Evangelical Christians and Baptists." *Ein Reiches Leben*: 13.
  78. Peter J. Braun to Jacob H. Janzen, 25 February, 1927. *Peter J. Braun Correspondence*.
  79. Heier, *Religious Schism*: 134-136.
  80. Heier, *Religious Schism*: 137. The entire foregoing section on the St. Petersburg movement is dependent upon Heier's study.
  81. The Mennonite representative must have been an "MB," and was probably Johann Wieler.
  82. *Ibid*: 136. It would be interesting to know who the Mennonites were. The Russian Baptists, according to Brandenburg, held their first independent church conference in the same year. (Two years earlier they had held a joint conference with MBs in Rückenau.) Their first president was the MB, Johann Wieler. *The Meek*: 94. Also present at the meeting in St. Petersburg was Dr. F. W. Baedeker from England who was to have a marked impact on later MB leaders. See R. S. Latimer, *Dr. Baedeker and His Apostolic Work in Russia* (London: Morgan & Scott Ltd., 1908): 19. Jacob Kroeker himself writes of Baedeker's impact upon him in an essay entitled: "Ein kritischer Querschnitt durch Blankenburg's Werden und Wollen in Krisen und Segenszeiten," in Otto Melle, *50 Jahre Blankenburger Konferenz* (Bad Blankenburg: Hartz, 1936): 69: "Dr. Baedeker became one of the

most powerful supporters of Blankenburg. No other servant of God had a greater impact upon my life in terms of providing me with an appreciation for the broad, ecumenical nature of the Christian faith than he . . . ."

83. Heier, *Religious Schism*: 137.
84. Sergei I. Zhuk, "'Those Who Imitate Germans': The Rise of Evangelical Movement among Ukrainian Peasants and Russian National Identity (1826-1916)," unpublished paper on the web, p. 4.
85. Quoted in *ibid*: 7.
86. *Ibid*. The same accusation was made against the Russian Baptists in World War I. See Steeves, *Russian Baptist Union*: 102.
87. *Ibid*: 8.
88. Gutsche, *Westliche Quellen*: 36; Brandenburg, *The Meek*: 48.
89. See, for example, Joseph Lehmann, *Geschichte der deutschen Baptisten*, 2 vols. (Hamburg: J. G. Oncken Nachfolger, 1896): 309-312; and Klimenko, *Anfänge des Baptismus*: 58. Both speak of the birth of a "true Baptist church" in Russia with the emergence of the Mennonite Brethren in 1860.
90. See Peter J. Klassen, "Baptists and Mennonites in Poland and Prussia," in Paul Toews, ed., *Mennonites and Baptists*: 73-80, enumerates instances in which this actually happened as Mennonites became members of Polish Baptist churches. Baptists (*Stundists*) in Russia were indeed only granted the status of a sect.
91. Government documents are replete with such accusations. This aspect was of particular concern to the Tsarist government. It clearly assumed that such "fanatical" proselytizing was a typical characteristic of the sect type.
92. See especially Albert W. Wardin, Jr., "Mennonite Brethren and German Baptists in Russia: Affinities and Dissimilarities," *Mennonites and Baptists*, writes: ". . . A third reason was the strong influence of the German Baptists.  
 "In considering the third factor, Mennonite Brethren historians, greatly influenced by the work of Peter M. Friesen on the Mennonites in the Russian Empire (which appeared in 1911), have tended until recently to understate the contribution of the Baptists. They preferred to stress the revivalistic influences of Wuest and the ability of the Mennonite Brethren to discover biblical principles on their own while also finding precedence in Menno Simons' writings. Friesen did acknowledge the German Baptist influence on Abraham Unger, the Mennonite Brethren leader in Chortitza who corresponded with Oncken, and the assistance of German Baptist visitors who helped the Mennonite Brethren in establishing a working church order. Possibly from a lack of sources and the desire to present the Mennonite Brethren as independent as possible from the Baptists, he described the ecclesiastical developments in Molotschna almost entirely as an inner Mennonite affair. When Friesen wrote his work, in spite of the fact that he had served a German Baptist church in Odessa for eight years beginning in 1888, he stressed the common roots and ties of the Mennonites . . . ," p. 101.
93. P. M. Friesen and H. J. Braun were close friends who probably met for the first time on the occasion of the final revision of the 1902 MB confession of faith. I possess an etching of Christ by Paul Friesen, P. M.'s only son, given to my great uncle, Heinrich J. Braun. On the back is written by Martha Braun, H.J.'s wife at the time of his death in 1946: "This etching was given to my beloved husband as a token of esteem by the son of his friend Friesen."
94. See the notices in the *Friedenstimme* beginning around 1909 that the manuscript lay ready but there was not enough money to publish it.
95. "'Since Brother Oncken was a Baptist,' writes Br. E[wert], 'some have concluded that the elders and teachers ordained by him must now become Baptists.' This

- concern troubled everyone's mind. Military service and the fact 'that we break bread in fellowship with the Baptists' was considered. 'The issue of smoking was also frequently raised, a habit which the Baptists do not prohibit as strictly as we do. Even Oncken himself smoked occasionally, which practice also was copied to some extent among us but which did not serve the cause of peace.' All of this was keenly evaluated and the conclusion reached 'that it were better if we would *separate ourselves completely from the Baptists so as not to lose our privileges* [my emphasis]. Br. Aron Lepp also agreed to this but Br. Unger, on the contrary, believed that we could walk hand in hand with the Baptists without losing our privileges.'" Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*: 463-464.
96. Johann Klassen to the Tsar, 15 May, 1862. Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*: 250, 251. See also pp. 315, 317, 319, 320, 345, 347, 386 and 408.
  97. Klaus, *Unsere Kolonien*: 264. This conflict is reminiscent of the "innovation" argument in the age of the Reformation. There Catholics accused Lutherans of being sectarians and 'innovators,' for they deviated from the 16<sup>th</sup> century Catholic teachings. The Lutherans, however, countered by asserting that it was the Catholic Church that was the heretic and the great 'innovator,' having deviated from biblical teachings and the ancient ways of the church. See my "Medieval Heretics or Forerunners of the Reformation: the Protestant Rewriting of the History of Medieval Heresy," Alberto Ferreiro, ed., *The Devil, Heresy and Witchcraft in the Middle Ages. Essays in Honor of Jeffrey B. Russell* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1998): 165-189. Klaus, throughout his book – probably because he gleaned the term from the archival documents he had access to – uses the term "Jumpers" to designate the MBs. Every literate Russian would undoubtedly have recognized the term. Originally it referred to an offshoot of the Khlysti sect, known as the "Shakouni" or "Jumpers," that first appeared in St. Petersburg during the reign of Alexander I (1801-1825). See Albert F. Heard, in his book *The Russian Church and Russian Dissent Comprising Orthodoxy, Dissent, and Erratic Sects* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1887): 261.
  98. See both Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*: 359, and Wardin, "Mennonite Brethren and Baptists in Russia," p. 99.
  99. Klaus, *Unsere Kolonien*: 213 note 1.
  100. Eugene Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976). See also Peter J. Braun, *Schulrat*: 56-57.
  101. Joshua A. Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics, 1905-1925* (DeKalb, ILL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003): 65-74, makes virtually the same case for Russia as Webber had made for France.
  102. See Peter Braun's note in a letter from B. H. Unruh of 8 April, 1931. *Peter J. Braun Correspondence*.
  103. These privileges included exemption from military service, the free expression of their religion, the control of their schools, and the right to settle in closed, largely self-governed, communities. All of these privileges had been designed to maintain their ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural isolation.
  104. See Abraham Braun, "Forsteidienst," *ML*, I: 663-664. There the author writes: ". . . Finally they [the Mennonites] decided in favor of the third position [forestry service]. The determining factor for the Mennonite congregations in this decision was the fact that they could maintain their young men in larger groups *in order better to care for their spiritual needs and protect them better against alien influences* [my emphasis] . . .," p. 664.



105. But even in the forestry camps the government attempted to teach Mennonites the Russian language. See document #6, Reel #3, Fond #49, Opis #1, Dielo 128, p. 2.
106. Peter Braun, in a manuscript just discovered in the *A. A. Friesen Papers*, entitled "Das Molotschnaer Mennonitische Lehrerseminar in Halbstadt: Deutsche Pädagogische Schule, 1878-1922," writes: "Earlier [since 1881] all subjects except German and religion had to be taught in the Russian language, even the leadership was in Russian hands since 1896." The revolutions of 1917 changed that, Braun continuing:  

"Since 1917, however, the reins of the institution are once again in German hands, and the teaching staff today consists exclusively of Germans, that is, exclusively of Mennonites . . .," p. 4. For a detailed, compact discussion of the Russian Mennonite schools, see Leonhard Froese, "Schulwesen der Mennoniten in Russland," *ML*, IV: 109-114.
107. In that same document, Peter Braun wrote, after noting that in 1917 control of the schools had come back into Mennonite hands and German was once again the language of instruction for everything: "This has the advantage that the work in the seminar can once more be carried out in accordance with uniform viewpoints and in a Mennonite spirit. *In this way a certain isolation was also achieved*, and that was necessary, for only in this way was it possible to maintain the old traditions, that is, once again to restore them and to protect the institution from the all-too-powerful infiltration of the spirit of the times." In his "Das Schulwesen unserer deutsch-evangelischen Stammesbrüder in Süd-Russland," H. J. Braun writes, in his concluding statement on this battle: "The leading combat organization was the schoolboard, but behind it stood the village associations with their congregational declarations. Thus, doing battle together we were able to maintain the field." *H. J. Braun Nachlass*. See also Peter J. Braun, *Schulrat*: 71-73.
108. See the addendum to the confession described in the next footnote, entitled: *Verschiedenheiten zwischen den vereinigten Mennoniten-Brüdergemeinden und den Baptistengemeinden, sowie den alten Mennonitengemeinden*, pp. 59-60.
109. The confession was translated into Russian by J. Wieler, then teacher at the Halbstadt Central School. His translation was revised by P. M. Friesen who was teaching the Russian language there at the time. See A. H. Unruh, *Mennoniten-Brüdergemeinde*: 152 and Harms, *Brüdergemeinde*: 46. Harms argues that it was the submission of this "Baptist" confession of faith that "misled" the government into assuming that MBs were in reality Baptists, stating: "It was by this Unger concoction in particular that the Russian government was misled, for she enquired repeatedly at the Chortitza Volost whether the MBs belonged to the Baptists; so long, indeed, until all the members of the MB Church were in fact numbered among the Baptists."
110. The confession is called *Glaubens-Bekennniss und Verfassung der gläubiggetauften und vereinigten Mennoniten-Brüdergemeinde im Südlichen Russland* (Basel: C. F. Spittler, 1876). One wonders who arranged for its printing in Basel, Spittler being one of the leaders in the Basel *Missionsgesellschaft* and the long-time secretary of the *Christentumsgesellschaft*. See Karl Renntisch, *Christian Friedrich Spittler: Sein Werk und Leben* (Metzingen/Wuert.: Verlag Ernst Franz, 1987). As we already know, P. M. Friesen revised its Russian translation and is nearly universally regarded as having studied in Basel. Perhaps he was the contact person; perhaps also this was where he had received his "Allianz" leanings. The confession – p. 17 note 2 – contains an asterisk note that appears virtually verbatim in his *Men-*

- nonite Brotherhood:** 291. Aspects of this confession are not “Mennonite,” however, and clearly indicate the folly of merely adding the so-called “Mennonite distinctives” to a general, Christian confession. (We shall return to the problem of “Mennonite/Anabaptist distinctives.”) For example: baptism is referred to as a “Gnadenmittel” – a means of God’s grace – a term Anabaptists would never have used (p. 21). It speaks of a “spiritual eating” of communion, clearly Calvinistic language (p.22). The section on divorce (pp. 47-48) is also Baptist, though here remarriage is not allowed. Military service is indeed rejected, but no biblical reasons are given (pp. 49-50). Harms, **Brüdergemeinde:** 46, also argues that the acceptance of a Baptist confession of faith by the early MB Church “was a great blunder because the MBs had declared to the Ohrloff congregation and Johannes Harder in 1862 that they regarded the Confession of Faith of the Rudnerweide Mennonite Church as their own.”
111. “Baptisten oder nicht?” *Odessaer Zeitung*, 1901, (7/20 April): 118, 119. Reading Baptist interpretations of the birth of the MB Church in Russia can at times be a little disconcerting, for writers often manifest a considerable ignorance about Anabaptist/Mennonite history, as in the case of Steeves, **Russian Baptist Union:** 6, where one reads: “Some of the Mennonites among these colonists came under the influence of pietistic and Baptist ideas transported from Germany by followers of the German Baptist pioneer, Johann Gerhard Oncken (1800-1884). As a result, **these Mennonites rejected the pedobaptist teachings of their tradition in favor of the doctrine of believer’s baptism and** [my emphasis], believing that the Mennonite religion had become too ritualistic, they began to gather regularly for evenings of Bible reading and prayer, which they called *stunden* (“hours” in German).” In this connection, the majority of Baptist historians appear just a little “imperialistic” in labeling the MB Church “a truly Baptist church.”
  112. Wardin, “Mennonite Brethren and Baptists,” p. 107.
  113. A. H. Unruh, **Mennoniten-Brüdergemeinde:** 152-153.
  114. See Abe J. Dueck, ed., *Moving Beyond Secession:* 37-54.
  115. Later evidence will indeed point to active government approval.
  116. Quoted in full in Unruh, **Mennoniten-Brüdergemeinde:** 153-156.
  117. Quoted in *ibid*, pp. 156-159.
  118. In his article, Harms asserted that the *Zionsbote* had some 700 subscribers in Russia. *Ibid:* 158.
  119. Perhaps he knew of the event narrated in John B. Toews, **Early Mennonite Brethren:** 125.
  120. Lehmann was a professor at the German Baptist seminary in Hamburg-Horn. His book was the two vol. *Geschichte der deutschen Baptisten*.
  121. “Baptisten oder nicht?” *op cit.* Becker, **Origin:** 174-182, discusses this topic at some length, saying at one point: “It may be inserted here that some Baptist ministers are circulating information in their church papers that the Mennonite Brethren Church actually originated through the work of the Baptists, and look upon us as Baptists for that reason. **Because of this erroneous contention** [my emphasis], the writer feels justified to give an explanation correcting this error. . . .”
  122. Only P. M. Friesen, or someone extremely close to him, who had already spent some fifteen years collecting material for a history of the 1860 Mennonite schism in Russia could have made – in 1900 – the following assertion: “In answer to the brazen assertion that the MBs initially, ‘as is well-known,’ (!) designated themselves Baptists and indeed were Baptists, I answer only that a great deal of still-existing written material from that time proves the opposite. A selection of this material from that time will be published.”

123. Lehmann may not have been quite as ignorant of MBs and their beginnings as the writer presumed; for, as professor at the German Baptist seminary at Hamburg-Horn, he must not only have encountered – but also taught – at least some of the following Russian MB students who studied there from the Rückenau church, the main MB church in Russia: 1) Abraham Friesen (1885-89); 2) Albrecht Huebert (1893-97); 3) Jakob Kroeker (1893-97); 4) Heinrich J. Braun (1895-99). See the *Festschrift zur Feier des 50. Jährigen Jubiläums des Predigerseminars der deutschen Baptisten zu Hamburg-Horn, 1880-1930*.
124. This argument was used, as far as I can tell, for the first time by J. F. Harms, editor of the *Zionsbote*, in his 1896 response to the anonymous author of the essay in the *Mennonitische Blätter*. See Unruh, *Mennoniten-Brüdergemeinde*: 158. Compare with the passage in the *Odessaer Zeitung*, “Mennoniten oder Baptisten?” p. 119. If P. M. Friesen was indeed the author of the piece in the *O Z*, then he took it from Harms. No doubt, being the avid collector of documentary evidence that he was – see my “P. M. Friesen the Historian,” pp. 81-100 in: Abraham Friesen, ed., *P. M. Friesen and His History* – Friesen was constantly on the lookout for more evidence, but also for a good argument.
125. For all the various materials – confessions – taken under review, see the introduction – “Zur Erläuterung” – to the 1902 confession entitled: *Glaubensbekenntnis der Vereinigten Christlichen Taufgesinnten Mennonitischen Brüdergemeinde in Russland* (Halbstadt: P. Neufeld, 1902): 3-5.
126. See Peter J. Braun, “Peter Martin Friesen,” *ML*, vol. II: 6. See also A. H. Unruh, *Mennoniten-Brüdergemeinde*: 253. We know next to nothing about this document, probably because P. M. Friesen wrote both the confession and the history. And in the latter he has told us virtually nothing about its genesis. We have only the “Erläuterung” at the beginning of the confession to help us. It should be noted, however, that in this 1900 revised document there is as yet no talk of Ludwig Keller’s “alt-evangelische Taufgesinnte” contained in the title of Friesen’s 1911 history.
127. The article, “Confessions of Faith,” *ME*, I (Scottsdale, PA.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1955): 684, calls this 1902 confession – quite mistakenly – a “second revised edition” of the 1876 confession. For clear evidence that P. M. Friesen must have been consciously underplaying the relationship between MBs and Baptists/Stundists, see note # 133 below.
128. I have already dealt – and hope to deal again, just much more extensively in a separate piece – with the concept of “Mennonite/Anabaptist distinctives” in my “An Anabaptist/Mennonite Brethren Confession of Faith,” *Directions*, vol. 27, # 1 (Spring 1998): 20-27. The assumption behind the concept is that Mennonites can simply add these “distinctives” to any orthodox Christian confession of faith and have an Anabaptist/Mennonite confession. I regard this to be utter folly.
129. (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI, 1988).
130. *MQR*, Vol. LXXII, No. 3 (July, 1998): 351-388.
131. See my “Der Friedensweg im Täuferum,” in: Klaus Garber et al., *Der Frieden – Rekonstruktion einer Europäischen Vision*, vol. I: *Erfahrung und Deutung von Krieg und Frieden: Religion – Geschlechter – Natur und Kultur* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2001): 157-170.
132. Neither the *Konfession, oder kurzes und einfältiges Glaubensbekenntnis derer so man nennt die vereinigte Flämische, Friesische und Hochdeutsche Taufgesinnte Mennonitengemeinde* (Odessa: Franzow & Nitzsche, 1853): 15-16, which the first MBs claimed as their own early on in the secession, or the *Glaubenslehre der Mennoniten oder Taufgesinnte nach derer öffentlichen Glaubensbekenntnissen*

- dargestellt von Cornelis Ris* (Berne, Ind.: Mennonite Book Concern, 1904): 38-41, has the Anabaptist core as clearly laid out as the 1902 *Glaubensbekenntnis der Vereinigten Christlichen Taufgesinnten Mennonitischen Brüdergemeinde in Russland* (Halbstadt: P. Neufeld, 1902): 33-38.
133. Friesen, *Erasmus, the Anabaptists, and the Great Commission*: 59-68.
  134. Thiessen, *P. M. Friesen*: 16. Friesen himself stood in fear of being banished because of his action. But although he was placed under police surveillance for a time, he eventually received a personal card from Pobedonostsev on which was written: "My dear Peter Martinovitch, greetings with Acts 10: 34-35," followed by his signature. The biblical passage reads: "Of a truth," says Peter, "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." And with that the persecution of the *Stundists* – at least so says the author – ceased. *Ibid*: 17-18.
  135. CSHAofR. Prokhanov, in 1909, revised this confession for use among his Evangelical Christians. At that time he added a number of articles not contained in the 1903 confession submitted to Kiev which reflected his group's position, such as: Article XI's emphasis on the freedom of a Christian and the recommendation that all should show tolerance and patience to those who held differing positions; Article XIII's emphasis upon the "baptism of the Spirit" – conversion – as well as water baptism; Article XVI's emphasis on the separation of Church and State, while justifying military service as a tax given by believers according to Christ's words: "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's . . . ." Prokhanov's version reflects the Radstockite and Pashkovite Evangelical Christian attempt to play down religious differences among Russia's evangelical groups.
  136. Latimer, *Baedeker in Russia*: 29.
  137. It was at a Bible conference on the Apanlee estate where Baedeker, invited to speak, impacted Kroeker. His wife wrote: "The encounter with this servant of God, who preached the Gospel with power was decisive for Jacob Kroeker's later ministry." Anna & Maria Kroeker, *Ein Reiches Leben*: 49.
  138. *Ibid*: 51.
  139. *Ibid*: 60.
  140. *Ibid*: 61.
  141. Prokhanov, *Cauldron*: 96.
  142. On the Ukrainian peasants' receptivity to this evangelical message and the social, political, economic and religious factors that encouraged it, see the recent study by Sergei I. Zhuk, *Russia's Lost Reformation*: 1-96. The alienation of the Ukrainian peasants from the Orthodox Church was especially strong.
  143. Heier, *Religious Schism*: 25.
  144. Leroy-Beaulieu, *Empire of the Tsars*, III: 53. See also Prokhanov, *Cauldron*: 16.
  145. Zernov, *Russian Religious Renaissance*.
  146. Prokhanov, *Cauldron*: 7. In this respect Prokhanov would appear to be in agreement with Zhuk.
  147. *Ibid*: 14. Zhuk does not deal with this consciously articulated attempt to bring about a religious reformation in Russia; indeed he does not mention Prokhanov or the others treated in this study.
  148. *Ibid*: 56.
  149. Leroy-Beaulieu, *Empire of the Tsars*, III: 451, states that *Stundism* was discovered in 1867 or 1870.
  150. Klimenko, *Anfänge des Baptismus*: 78-81.
  151. *Ibid*: 86-87. Latimer, p. 101 asserts that some *Stundists* escaped punishment as Baptists.

152. Persecution did take place on the local level during this time, but in the *mir*, where priests incited the local Orthodox faithful against the *Stundists*. *Ibid*: 88-100. See also R. S. Latimer, *Under Three Tsars*: 10-11.
153. Indeed, Leroy-Beaulieu compares Russia in the late nineteenth century to the Spain of the sixteenth.
154. Heather Jean Coleman, "The Most Dangerous Sect: Baptists in Tsarist and Soviet Russia, 1905-1929," doctoral dissertation (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1998): 1.
155. Latimer, *Under Three Tsars*: 143.
156. *Ibid*: 150.
157. *Ibid*: 148.
158. *Ibid*: 97.
159. For a history of the German Allianz movement in the context of the larger European movement, see Erich Beyreuther, *Der Weg der Evangelischen Allianz in Deutschland* (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 1969); and Melle, *Blankenburger Konferenz*.
160. Quoted in Leroy-Beaulieu, *Empire of the Tsars*, III: 514-515. Hermann Dalton, leader of the Reformed Church in Russia, responded to Pobedonostsev's defense with an "open letter" in which he attacked the Over Procurator's position in fundamental ways. Entitled, in its German versions, *Offenes Sendschreiben an den Oberprokurator des russischen Synods, Herrn Wirklichen Geheimrat Konstantin Pobedonoszeff*, the letter had, by 1889, already gone through eight editions (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1889). After an extended attack on Pobedonostsev's policies, Dalton concluded: "Those of us observing events [in Russia] from a greater distance see this divine judgment beginning to affect even your enthusiastic defense [of the Orthodox Church]. In all that we have said, we have not failed to acknowledge that an active love of country as well as a sincere devotion to your church is behind your restless activity, consuming you in its service. Nor have we any desire to ferret out any selfish motives that might drive you or anyone else, as though with a sharp instrument, from one position to another. Nevertheless, because we love Russia and feel deeply her distress, we have, in the process of our investigation of your tenure in office, discerned the ever more clearly emerging signs of change produced to the detriment of Russia and your church by your policies. [These signs] point to an approaching judgment of God that no one who desires to be a disciple of Christ but resists fulfilling his commandments will be able to avoid," p. 89.
161. *Ibid*: 516-517.
162. Latimer, *Under Three Tsars*: 66; Klimenko, *Anfänge des Baptismus*: 96; Brandenburg, *The Meek*: 78-80; Klibanov, *Religious Sectarianism*: 276.
163. Prokhanov, *Cauldron*: 67.
164. Klimenko, *Anfänge des Baptismus*: 76.
165. Campbell, *A Most Dangerous Sect*: 24.
166. Kargell, apparently, was no stranger to the Mennonite Brethren for J. F. Harms, *Brüdergemeinde*: 60, writes of him: "In these copy-books [collections of itinerant preachers' reports] were some interesting reports written by Br. Kargell (1876 and 1877). The Mennonite Brethren Church was deemed worthy by this brother to send in contributions to help banished Russian [brothers]. The *Zionsbote* acted as intermediary, and this author counts his participation in that work as the most blessed experience of his life of faith."
167. On Wieler, see Becker, *Origin*: 172-173. Harms, *Brüdergemeinde*: 59, observes apropos Johann Wieler: "Special meetings took place every year at which many

- difficult questions were discussed; in 1876 it was the difficult question concerning fellowship with the Baptists. Other points of discussion were: emigration to America, communion fellowship with persons who had not been baptized in accordance with the MB understanding. In 1882 and 1883 Br. Johann Wieler made life very difficult by demanding that the MB Church enter into full fellowship with the Russian Stundist congregations, sometimes called Baptists, but in other places called Evangelical Christians. It was probably the fear of conflict with the Russian clergy that was the main reason why Wieler's demands were turned down."
168. *Ibid*: 24-25.
  169. Quoted in Latimer, *Under Three Tsars*: 223.
  170. Abraham Braun, "Die Kirchliche Spaltungen in der russland-deutschen Mennoniten Gemeinden," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der mennoniten, Festschrift fuer D. Christian Neff* (Weierhoff, 1938): 14. Perhaps Mennonites were not aware of the fact that in this regard the October Manifesto had changed nothing. Heather Campbell writes in this regard: "... the revolutionary settlement of 1905 nevertheless reserved important arenas of religious activity for the Orthodox Church alone. Most important among these was the right publicly to preach and to make converts. Chapter 90 of the new Criminal Code still punished by imprisonment or arrest, anyone 'guilty of pronouncing or reading publicly a sermon, speech, or essay, or of distribution or public display of compositions or images that lead to the conversion of Orthodox to another confession or teaching, or sect, if these activities are committed with the goal of seducing the Orthodox.'" *The Most Dangerous Sect*: 129.
  171. Kroecker, *Ein Reiches Leben*: 60-61.
  172. In an editorial comment of 27 May, 1906, the *Friedensstimme* stated: "The first conflict of the Russian government with the peoples' representatives, the Duma, [produced] a sharp confrontation in which both sides sinned; the peoples' representatives by making impossible demands, and by the government in that it did not recognize enough the Imperial Duma's legislative power. But she is one [such a legislative body] to the same extent as parliaments of other constitutional countries. This confrontation indeed threatened to ignite a fearful conflagration in all Russia." *FrSt*, IV, #21 (27 May, 1906): 1.
  173. Witte, *Memoirs*: 680.
  174. Frederic S. Zuckerman, *The Tsarist Secret Police in Russian Society, 1880-1917* (New York: New York University Press, 1996): 172.
  175. *FrSt*, IV, #15 (29 April, 1906): 1. "He [Witte] has not justified the trust placed in him by the people that he would implement the freedoms promised in the 17 October Manifesto." It appears that although Witte may have wanted to, the Tsarist government never intended to grant these freedoms; it was simply playing a delaying game. The government's attitude was graphically illustrated in the following exchange between Sir Bernard Pares and Witte around this time: "'Are we right in regarding you as the author of the October Manifesto?' Pares asked Witte. 'Certainly,' he said, 'And what do you think of the Constitution now?' 'I have a constitution in my head,' he said, 'but as to my heart, I spit on it!' and he spit on the floor in front of me." Quoted in Warren Bartlett Walsh, *Russia and the Soviet Union: A Modern History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958): 335-336. But see Witte's own statement in his memoirs where he observed: "Thus, under my leadership the most essential promises in the 17 October Manifesto were fully carried out. The promise of inviolability of person was assured because the law on exceptional measures could not be applied without consent of the State Duma and the State Council. Temporary legislation providing for freedom of

the press, freedom to form associations, including unions, and freedom of assembly was enacted. As for freedom of conscience, the principle of toleration had, as I have indicated, already been established by the decree of 17 April, 1905. Also, the legislative bodies were provided with adequate checks on the work of the administration.

"I have already indicated that what was accomplished during my tenure in establishing civic freedoms has been undermined since I left office. In fact, because of administrative abuses, there is less freedom now than before 17 October. Why?

"First of all, because all the revolutionary and virtually all the liberal parties have acted shortsightedly, literally throwing off all restraints and unrealistically rejecting the 17 October Manifesto as inadequate and then rejecting all that was done to carry it out. Second, their senseless attack on the existing structure of our great nation and Empire produced, as similar attacks in other countries have done, a counterrevolutionary attack, a reaction supported by those in high places unhappy over the new order created by 17 October. Third was the contribution of the Stolypin regime, which professed to believe in the 17 October Manifesto, but which in fact did whatever suited its interests." Sidney Harcove, ed. & trans., *The Memoirs of Count Witte* (London & New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1990): 590-591.

176. *FrSt*, IV, #26 (1 July, 1906): 1.

## CHAPTER 6

1. Klibanov, *Religious Sectarianism*: 317. For a more comprehensive and less biased version of the story, see Terry Martin, *The Mennonites and the Russian Duma 1905-1914* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1996): 12-17.
2. *H. J. Braun Nachlass*.
3. Steeves, *Russian Baptist Union*, makes the same case for the Russian Baptists, pp. 101-106.
4. Prokhanov, *Cauldron*: 264. In a letter of 11 May, 1931, well after Prokhanov's famous disastrous attempted compromise with the new Communist government in 1922 which clearly colored his assessment of the leader of the Evangelical Christians, Peter Braun wrote: ". . . I therefore judge [because of the weakness of the Russian character] the Evangelical Movement in Russia, for example, differently from the Wernigeroder [Jacob Kroeker]. They like to speak, as does Prokhanov, of a [spiritual] renewal of the Russian people, of a Reformation, etc. I place a large question mark behind this. No doubt a religious movement is certainly there, but I cannot ascribe this kind of importance to it. Instead, I consider it very superficial, in keeping with the character of the Russian people. As evidence [for my position] I just want to tell you of two experiences. 1) There were people among the Makhnovtsy who called themselves Baptists and knew their Bibles quite thoroughly. To be sure, they were exceptions, but they were nevertheless to be found among them. 2) In 1919 I was in Rostov where I met the preacher/pastor of the Russian Evangelical congregation. I asked him how the members of his congregation felt about the Bolshevik revolution. He responded to the question with a mournful tale. Many of them, he said, had joined the front ranks of the plundering masses. Indeed, they said, "sharing" was the proper thing to do; the apostles themselves had introduced a community of goods! He had therefore had a very difficult time convincing his members of the injustice and illegality of these events. A few had responded by returning their plundered

goods. – Now I do not wish to generalize from these examples, but they nevertheless speak volumes. And he [the Russian Christian] remains a child of his people. Perhaps he cannot do anything about the fact that he is the way he is. His ability to understand does not extend that far, perhaps his insight does not penetrate to the extent that he recognizes the objectionable nature of those actions. As a consequence, he personally does not even have to be dishonest about the matter. He is just – a Russian: easily enthused, easily inflamed, and unable to contend with difficulties which he therefore avoids – by means of compromises [a clear reference to Prokhanov's 1922 actions]. In his choice of means he is by no means petty but rather generous, and for all that – hurrah, the Gospel is victorious, hal-lelujah!! You and I cannot go along with that, but nor do we need to bemoan the fact that we cannot." *Peter J. Braun Correspondence*. One can clearly sense, in these words, the residue of Peter Braun's own bitter experiences during and immediately after WWI in Russia.

5. Martin, *Mennonites and the Duma*: 13.
6. See also especially the section on "Russian Evangelicals and Pacifism" in Heather Coleman's *The Most Dangerous Sect*: 308-339.
7. Steeves, *Russian Baptist Union*: 492, states: "In its political program, the sectarian union sympathized with the moderate political parties in Russia. One Constitutional Democrat said that the platform of the union corresponded fully, in spirit, to that of his party [the Kadet Party]. P. M. Friesen, a Mennonite co-founder of the union, became a member of the local Kadet committee in Sevastopol as a result of an agreement between the union and the committee whereby the former would not enter its own candidates in the first Duma election."
8. The meeting took place about the precise time that Prokhanov was forming the "First Evangelical Christian Church of St. Petersburg" in distinction and opposition to the Russian Baptist Union. The latter, under the influence of the German Baptists – and perhaps also the English Particular Baptists – had become overtly Augustinian-Calvinistic in its theology. Prokhanov, affiliating himself with the Pashkovites or Radstockites and becoming the leader of the Russian Evangelical Christians which grew out of the former, became less dogmatic in the early years of the twentieth century and more open to the theology of the English General Baptists. In so doing he became inclined – like P. M. Friesen, H. J. Braun and their Raduga associates – to focus on the essentials of Christianity and exercise forbearance in the areas of disagreement. It was this "Allianz" approach to Christianity that made the Mennonites – at least those with whom Prokhanov was familiar – "resemble the Evangelical Christians very much." On the relationship of Prokhanov with the Russian Baptists, see Steeves, *Russian Baptist Union*: 61-75.
9. Prokhanov, *Cauldron*: 148-149.
10. The copy of Prokhanov's *Cauldron* I received through UCSB's interlibrary loan services has the word "my" underlined every time Prokhanov used it, obviously by a reader irritated by the author's less than humble approach to his accomplishments. The irritated reader had a point, and it was not only the tip of his pen. From reading Prokhanov's autobiography one could be misled into thinking that *he* did everything. Perhaps, therefore, one should read the above passage with some caution as well.
11. Martin, *Mennonites and the Duma*: 15.
12. Aside from the drive to liquidate lands of enemy aliens in Russia, the government also sought to liquidate commercial enterprises. See especially Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire: The Campaign against Enemy Aliens during World War I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003): 55-83.



13. Another reason for Prokhanov's eagerness to work with Braun and his Raduga associates lies in the timing of Braun's visit to him. For, beginning in 1907, as Steeves reports, "Prokhanov began laying the foundation for his union . . . at a small conference he convened in Ekaterinoslav for evangelical sectarians who were displeased with Mazeav's [the Baptist leader] leadership. In the summer of 1908, after Fetler had been elected to the executive body of the Russian Baptist Union, Prokhanov called a congress of 'Evangelical Christians' in Odessa which was attended by fourteen delegates from nine congregations. The congress brought an outpouring of expressions of dissatisfaction with the Baptist Union, including repudiation of the name 'Baptist' as unbiblical and exotic, disagreement with the ordination of presbyters by agents of an ecclesiastical union, and hostility toward a printed confession of faith such as the Baptist Union had recently adopted. The Evangelical Christians maintained that 'their confession of faith was the New Testament and they did not want to know any other kind of creed or catechism.'" *The Russian Baptist Union*: 69-70.
14. SAofCr, Fond No. 27, Opis No. 24, Dielo No. 379.
15. The document submitted was entitled: "The Mennonite Position on the Issue of Propaganda and Religious Freedom."
16. Kroeker, *Ein Reiches Leben*: 33, 36, 37, etc.
17. Another element may have been involved. As Steeves, *Russian Baptist Union*: 73, observes: ". . . Inter alia, these sectarians had a pragmatic reason for their denominational preference [to be either Baptist or Evangelical]. In that part of the Ukraine, provincial authorities still based their conduct on 'a ministerial circular in which it said that Russian Baptists do not exist, but they are *Shtundo-Baptists*, whose meetings are proscribed by law.' 'Evangelical Christians,' however, were not repressed." From this perspective, an "Allianz" approach to proselytizing may have been much less dangerous than doing it from within a particular "sectarian" denomination. As we shall see, H. J. Braun stressed this "Allianz" approach to spreading the Christian message in Molotschna from within the "Vereinshaus," also known as the "Allianzhause."
18. *Ibid*: 3-4.
19. *FrSt*, IV, #42 (21 October, 1906): 1.
20. *Ibid*: 4.
21. In the official inter-governmental correspondence regarding the MB schism, Mennonites and other Protestant groups were routinely referred to as sects even though the law had granted them the status of a confession. Here, now, this ancient prejudice appears to be surfacing quite openly.
22. *FrSt*, IV, #43 (28 October, 1906): 477.
23. *FrSt*, V, #34 (25 August, 1907): 436.
24. Count Paul Vasili wrote in his *Confessions of a Czarina* (New York & London: Harper & Brothers, 1918): 152-153: ". . . What I only want to point out is the utter callousness shown by the Czar and the Czarina in presence of the abominable repression which the police, together with some military commanders, inaugurated in regard to the people compromised even in a slight degree in the movement of emancipation which had shaken the existence of the dynasty. It was in vain that some wise people, like Count Witte, for instance, had tried to explain to Nicholas II that unless he frankly granted some reforms without which it would be impossible to govern Russia in the future he might expect an explosion of wrath on the part of the nation which it would be almost impossible to subdue or to destroy. The Czar refused to listen, and when at last he yielded to the demands of his Ministry and signed the famous Manifesto of 17<sup>th</sup> October,

- with its 'simulacre' of constitution, it was with the firm intention not to keep any of the promises which it contained, and to try, on the contrary, to reduce to absolute powerlessness the National Assembly, or Duma, as it was called, the election of which he had allowed only because he believed or hoped it might prove useful to him in the solution of the many problems which were waiting to be unraveled." See also Robert D. Warth, *Nicholas II: The Life and Reign of Russia's Last Monarch* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997): 99-104; and Mehlinger & Thompson, *Count Witte*: 65-66.
25. This famous statement by Witte quoted by Bernard Pares was apparently misinterpreted by the latter to whom it was made considerably after the Manifesto had been published and Witte had become embittered about how Stolypin and others – according to him – had undermined it.
  26. Orlando Figes, *A Peoples' Tragedy*: 203.
  27. *FrSt*, V, #38 (22 September, 1907): 491.
  28. The transcript of the Duma proceedings lists Bergmann as a member of its Religious Affairs Committee from the very beginning of his tenure there. That means that he would have had intimate knowledge of what was going on in the above matter. See *Gosudarstvennaia Duma. Ukazatel'k Stenograficheskim Otchetam. Treitii Sozyv. Sessia II. 1908-1909* (St. Petersburg: Gosudartvennaaia Tipgrafiya, 1909): 64.
  29. This document did get to the St. Petersburg government; there is a copy in the St. Petersburg archives. Reel #3, Fond #821, Opis 5, Delo No. 1026, Document #57. Whether it came via H. A. Bergmann or through the Mennonite delegates later – Goerz, Epp, and Braun – in 1910 is not clear. What is also interesting in the context of the above document is its reference to the power of the Gospel to create "a new social order here on earth." A plank of Friesen's political party, this statement demonstrates the similarity between the two documents. Perhaps both were written by Friesen.
  30. *Bt*, III, #11 (8 February, 1908): 1-2.
  31. David H. Epp, "Zur Glaubensfreiheit," *Bt* (8 December, 1908): 3.
  32. *Dokumente*: 7.
  33. Perhaps this is why the head of the Department of Religious Affairs informed the Mennonite delegates – Braun, Epp, and Goerz – that their isolation was, once and for all, over. That isolation must also have referred to their military exemption.
  34. *FrSt*, VII, #14 (4 April, 1909): 10.
  35. *FrSt*, VII, #20 (16 May, 1909): 2-3.
  36. On the "Old Believers," see: Roy R. Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russia* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1995).
  37. *FrSt*, VII, #21 (23 May, 1909): 10.
  38. *FrSt*, VII, #23 (6 June, 1909): 11.
  39. *FrSt*, VII, #24 (13 June, 1909): 4.
  40. *FrSt*, VII, #42 (17 October, 1909): 8. "The Duma, which has now reconvened in order to continue its work of reform, was greeted with the news that two of the Ministry of Internal Affairs' drafts on toleration have been withdrawn. The first was the draft 'On the Relationship of the State to the various Confessions.' Apparently the Ministry has, in the meantime, changed its mind about the meaning of the October Manifesto in this regard. **What is concerned here is the following: [religious] propaganda, proselytism, seduction of the Orthodox, various actions by clerics with regard to those of other faiths, the sermons of the reigning church and its protection. 'Originally,' the Ministry of Internal Affairs had projected that it would abolish many of the law's current provisions . . . .**"

"It is well-known that the Synod and Extreme Right fought for the right to examine and revise the draft on religious toleration. Above all, the Synod wishes to have the deciding word in matters relating to the faith. It appears as though the Synod's wish has been fulfilled."

41. P. M. Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*: note #9, p. 1030.
42. One wonders to what extent this emphasis came from the MB leaders involved in the consultation, for Abraham Braun, H. J's youngest brother, wrote the following later in his "Die Kirchliche Spaltungen in den russland-deutschen Mennoniten-Gemeinden": 14: "When the Mennonite immigrants arrived in Russia they were forbidden, upon threat of severest punishment, to 'propagate their religion' in the Orthodox Church. But when, on 10 October, 1905 [new style], the manifesto regarding religious freedom was issued, **the Mennonite Brethren Church believed this prohibition to have been abolished** [my emphasis]. [Consequently], at a general conference [of the MB Church] in May of 1906 a committee to 'evangelize among the Russians' was elected. This committee appointed evangelists and began to distribute Evangelical-Christian literature. But many saw this activity as illegal [religious] propaganda. Therefore when the government declared that the Manifesto was not to be interpreted in the above fashion, that indeed any missionary activity amongst the Orthodox was forbidden before as well as after [1905], the General Conference of 1910 disbanded the above committee." The minutes of the 1906 *Bundeskonzferenz* are not extant, but those of the 1907 conference demonstrate unequivocally the extent to which the MBs were involved in this "Evangelisation unter den Russen." See Abe J. Dueck, *Beyond Secession*: 62-63.
43. "Erläuternde Beilage zur Erklärung: 'Die Stellung der Mennoniten zur Frage von der Glaubensfreiheit und der Propaganda,'" *Dokumente*: 7-21.
44. This was the same Kamensky who had already come to the Mennonite defense in the press. See Peter Braun, *Kto takie Mennonity?*
45. A. Goerz, D. Epp, H. Braun, "Berichterstattung der Glaubenssachen nach St. Petersburg abgeordneten Gemeindevertreter," *FrSt*, VIII, #22 (17 March, 1910): 3-6.
46. In Russian and German, as the other two documents: *Dokumente*: 23-35. The German title is: "Zur Geschichte der Entstehung der Mennoniten."
47. "Berichterstattung," p. 5.
48. "Zur Geschichte der Entstehung der Mennoniten," p. 25.
49. One wonders how the Orthodox ministers viewed such a contention.
50. *Ibid*: 35.

## CHAPTER 7

1. H. P. Unruh, Bishop of Muntau in the Halbstadt area, was not an MB. He opens his report with the words: "Hier bei uns in Halbstadt . . ." *MR* (11 May, 1910): 13. It had earlier been printed in the pages of *Bt*.
2. Why should the director of the public schools be a part of the investigating team?
3. The term *Vereinshaus* appears to have been taken over by the Molotschna Mennonites from the German *Allianz* movement. Such a "house" was to be a place where interconfessional Christian meetings could take place. See Erich Beyreuther, *Der Weg der Evangelischen Allianz*: 46-47.
4. On 14 January, 1914, the Governor of Taurida sent a report to the Department of Religious Affairs on MB "propagandistic" activity in Halbstadt. The report referred

to earlier ones of 8 October and 16 December, 1909 on the "Mennonite Youth Society" of Halbstadt – probably the *Jugendverein* – which allegedly functioned as a "secret six-class religious educational institution to train young sectarian teachers." Clearly reflecting the conflict over control of schools in the colony and the overblown suspicion of at least some of the authorities, the earlier reports had led to an investigation of the "propagandistic" activity of the "Halbstadt Baptists," especially of H. J. Braun who is called the "most active Baptist," by the Melitopol District Police Officer, the "Master of Theology" – probably some kind of church official – and Margaritov, the Taurida District Supervisor of Schools. The *Vereinshaus*, here called an "Allianz-Haus" or "Konferenz-Haus," stood at the center of the alleged activities. It had been built, a second report of 9 April, 1910 stated, for the purpose of "the preaching of 'all confessions.'" In fact, however, the report continued, "it is almost completely occupied by Baptists: Vyozyovsky, Balikhin, and by Rückenauers, mainly Heinrich [J.] Braun." The latter had, it said, attended the Hamburg Baptist seminary, graduating in 1902. How could he not be a Baptist? The report also listed Ivan Prokhanov as one of the early partners of the Raduga firm.

Throughout both reports the attempt by the "Rückenau Brotherhood" to win local Russian/Ukrainian Orthodox workers to the "Baptist" faith is highlighted. Grigory Luzanov, a worker at Raduga told the investigators (in Report # 1), for example: that "many Russian workers attend Mennonite-Baptist meetings." Others stated that "very often different Baptist preachers visit Halbstadt, lecturing in Russian. They invite mainly seasonal workers, whose number in Halbstadt reaches 2000." The second, 9 April, 1909 report, also highlighted the "missionary" work being done among the Molokans in the village of Astrakhanka, south of Halbstadt. It proceeded to describe MB origins and then stated: "In its theology this movement is related to the Baptists and is called so among real Mennonites [Old Church Mennonites]. However, this group objects to being labeled as such, referring to themselves as 'Mennonites baptized by Faith'. They hold on to this name in order to maintain the privileges of being exempted from military service, which was granted to the original Mennonites."

Heinrich J. Braun, then, stood at the center of activity around the *Vereinshaus* as a focal point for the propagation of a non-denominational *Allianz* Christianity. Together with the "Evangelical Christians," he and other Rückenauers were instrumental, in 1907, of establishing a seminary among the Molokans. He was also involved in establishing "Bible Courses" to be taught at the *Vereinshaus*, and his press distributed a "series of cheap Baptist brochures in the Russian and German languages" across Russia. If the Rückenauers were not actually involved in "illegal" propagandistic activity, they were about as close as one could come without overstepping the bounds. Or did they overstep them? *SAofCr*, Fund 27, Inventory 1, File 13015.

About a year later, estate owner David Dyck who funded the Philadelphia Tract Society applied to the Department of Religious Affairs to be permitted to organize and sponsor a "Bible discussion" on his Apenlee estate. Walter L. Jacques, graduate of the Universities of Berlin and Halle, and teaching at the Molokan seminary at the time, was to be the speaker. The report described him as a "typical Allianz-Christian" and "member of the Russian Evangelical Union, founded by I. S. Prokhanov, and is in close relations with Russian Evangelical Baptists like Prokhanov or H. J. Braun." The response of the ministry to Dyck's request was that "the meeting at Apenlee estate *can only be allowed if it is going to be supervised by the Old Mennonites, with the presence of Old Mennonite*

- teachers* [my emphasis]." In matters relating to religious propaganda, the government knew that Old Church Mennonites – as a group – would not overstep the bounds; indeed, they could be trusted to remain well inside the markers set them by the government. Not so the MBs, however. No reference is made to the 19 to 22 March, 1910 Raduga investigation in the 9 April, 1910 report, however.
5. At first I thought the investigation might have been triggered by a former disgruntled Russian teacher at the Central School. But Peter Braun, in his lengthy letter to his brother Abraham of 16 November, 1932, pointed me in another direction. There he wrote: "The investigation by the Vice Governor in the year 1910 was not directed against the Mennonite Brethren Church as such, but what was at stake was the closing of Raduga itself; that was the centerpiece of the entire investigation. Nor did this investigation have any connection to earlier investigations by the government, *but emanated from Margaritov, the Director of Schools* [my emphasis]; he was the driving force, for the Russian tracts published by Raduga were a thorn in his eye. Our brother Heinrich is the one who knows the most about these two events." *Peter J. Braun Correspondence*. The above would seem to suggest that Peter's opinion was also that of his brother Heinrich. But the official documents on the investigation make no mention of Margaritov. Clearly, even those best informed about the investigation had no idea who was responsible for it.
  6. He did encounter the Sareptaers there in 1904. See Asher, *P. A. Stolypin*: 44; and "Saratow," *ML*, IV: 24-25. Apparently Stolypin also visited the Mennonite colony of Alexandertal. But this was in the summer of 1910. See Wilhelm Hamm, "Privilegien: Die Freiheiten der Mennoniten in Russland," *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch* (1978): 33.
  7. See Figes, *A Peoples' Tragedy*: 226-228.
  8. Figes, *A Peoples' Tragedy*: 227.
  9. Walsh, *Russia*: 341.
  10. "On the other hand, Stolypin acknowledged that the relationship between the state and the Church had to be changed because citizens of different Christian faiths as well as non-Christians now played a role in the country's political life. But the only significant change he proposed was to end state interference in questions of canon law or dogma. In those spheres, the Church must be independent. Yet he also insisted on maintaining the pre-eminence of the Orthodox Church . . . ." Asher, *P. A. Stolypin*: 300.
  11. I have been unable to establish the precise date at which Bondar arrived on the scene. If Stolypin appointed Bondar, he may well have appointed others elsewhere.
  12. Johann H. Willms, "Erinnerungen und Eindrücke," *Bote* (14 April, 1927): 3.
  13. Peter J. Braun, *Schulrat*: 99.
  14. In his *From the Heights into the Depths: Memories from the Years of Childhood and Youth in South Russia during the Years 1904 to 1924*, Nicholas J. Fehderau writes, referring to the Molotschna: "There was nothing for the youth either; once there was an attempt to organize a *Jugendverein*, but it did not last long – times were too restless . . .," manuscript copy in the MB Studies Centre & Archives, Winnipeg.
  15. *CSHAofR*, Fond 821, Opis 133, Delo 169, Request No. 44, Document # 1, pp. 1-11. The Bondar report attached listed the various Baptist schools abroad where Russian MBs and Baptists went to study "to learn the propaganda of sectarian preaching among the Russian population." Indeed, "Baptist" religious propaganda among Russian Orthodox members stood at the center of the government's con-

- cern. Bondar lists the following schools and their curricula: 1) at Lodtz (a seminary for Russian Baptists established by the German Baptists); 2) Occasional traveling courses for Latvian Baptist students in Libana, Riga, and Tallin; 3) the Allianz Bible School in Berlin where H. J. and Peter Braun's younger brother Abraham was studying; 4) the Hamburg Baptist Seminary where H. J. Braun had studied – which Bondar knew about; 5) the London Baptist College where Fettler had studied; 6) the Baptist College in Bristol where Prokhanov had studied; 7) an Adventist Seminary in Friedenau, Germany, and 8) a Methodist seminary in Frankfurt, Germany. Bondar concluded his report by stating that his information came from interviews with Prokhanov, Fettler, Wilson, and Zakharov, a Duma member who had founded the Molokan seminary. Document # 5, p. 1.
16. Document # 9.
  17. Peter Braun writes of him: "In this regard [the school problems with the government] became even worse when the Doctor of Theology S. Margaritov became the director of the public schools in the Taurida government (1899). This man added religious to the already present national concerns, and in this regard the Menonites appeared to him as doubly dangerous to the state. Therefore he watched them especially closely . . . ." *Schulrat*: 88.
  18. Here one gets a sense of the reverse dynamics of the thinking described by Volkonsky at the beginning of this chapter. Obviously, one could not be Russian and Baptist at the same time. Therefore, becoming a Baptist also meant becoming a German. This accusation was made by the Orthodox Church officials at large. See especially Sergei I. Zhuk, "Those Who Imitate Germans."
  19. Document # 11, pp. 1-8.
  20. Document # 12, pp. 1-3.
  21. "Rationalist teaching" was the Russian Orthodox term for Western Protestant theological discourse as contrasted with the Russian Orthodox Church's more ritualistic and mystical approach to Christianity. Stolypin is here clearly referring to the spread of *Stundism*, the Ukrainian Baptists, and Evangelical Christians.
  22. Document # 13, pp. 1-5. Stolypin signed as the Minister of Internal Affairs.
  23. H. van der Smissen, in an article in the *MBI*, # 8 (August, 1910): 68, sheds some more light on this *Vereinshaus*. Under the supposed new era of religious freedom, the MBs had built a number of such buildings in order to propagate the Gospel. Here a kind of evangelical, ecumenical movement was to be fostered between all Christians who loved Christ. "Deeper life conferences" were held here, youth organizations met, and – in Halbstadt – the Russian Baptists held their services here. On the occasion of the investigation, an Orthodox cleric, whom van der Smissen referred to as the "Russian Pope," asked about what went on in the *Vereinshaus*. Upon being told, he asked if he might preach Christ from that pulpit in the Orthodox sense. He was at first met by stony silence; only later was he given permission to preach. And so, on 22 March, at the close of a Russian Baptist service, he had preached on the forgiveness of sins. In his sermon he warned his Russian listeners about the dangerous game they were playing in Halbstadt and counseled them not to be misled into leaving the Orthodox Church.
  24. *Ibid.*
  25. At the very least, the "they" referred to the community of people at Raduga – the *Friedensstimme*, the bookstore, and everyone associated with the press; at the most, it included the MB Church in Rückenau.
  26. Historians have recently pointed to such a spiritual revival as being in the offing around the time of the Russo-Japanese War, Thomas E. Bird observing: "Europe, inclusive of Russia, went through a critical watershed in the last decade of the

nineteenth century. A paradoxical mix of hope and resignation, expectation and despair, was abroad. In the fields of art and literature, philosophy and theology, a multivalent reaction against Positivism took place. Religious themes emerged as significant; indeed culture became a category that was taken seriously by people who had carefully condemned it their whole lives. *Russia, especially, stood on the threshold of a spiritual and intellectual renaissance . . .* [my emphasis]." "Religion and the Revolution of 1905: An Introductory Word," *Russian History / Histoire Russe*, vol. 4 (1977): 101. Sergei I. Zhuk, *Russia's Lost Reformation*, argues that such a reformation began around 1860 already among the Ukrainian peasantry. But it did so unconsciously. Under Braun and Prokhanov this desire for a 16<sup>th</sup> century type Reformation became a conscious goal.

27. The St. Petersburg archives contain document after document that alleges MB (and Baptist) proselytizing among the Orthodox Church members. The building of Mennonite churches was denied on occasion because an Orthodox cleric complained that the proposed site was too close to his church.
28. P. J. Braun to J. H. Janzen, 25 February, 1927: "Where, then, does this talk amongst us come from that our forefathers had made such a promise [not to proselytize among the Orthodox]? I for my part believe that it first arose when the Mennonite Brethren Church began to participate in the work of evangelizing among the Russians. I say, began to participate, for the MB Church never carried on, in any essential manner, an independent effort in this regard, a few exceptions (. . .) excluded . . ." *Peter J. Braun Correspondence*. In an article in the *Friedensstimme* of 18 September, 1933, Abraham Braun, the youngest of the brothers and at the time secretary at the *Allianz Bibelschule* in Berlin, wrote: ". . . I would, at the very outset, like especially to emphasize that the Berlin Bible School is a missions school, and in the first instance for Russia.

"The Berlin Bible School was founded in 1905 [perhaps another indication of the fact that the European "Allianz" movement also wanted to get into the post-Manifesto Russia to evangelize], and primarily for the purpose of providing our Russian brothers with the necessary guidance to carry on the work of evangelization in their home communities. To this day the school has remained true to this principle; for of the 169 students who have studied at the school from 1905 – 1913, 166 came from Russia. Even in the school year that has just begun (1913 – 1914) on September 15, most of the students are from Russia . . ." *FrSt*, XI, #73 (18 September, 1913): 2.

And in 1910, Jacob Kroeker, who until then had been co-editor of the *Friedensstimme* with Abraham, moved to Wernigerode, Germany, to establish *Licht im Osten*, a missions work directed to the Russian people – a work that is still in operation. With all of this, one can well imagine the kind of work that was going on at Raduga.

29. A. Kroeker, "Der Regenbogen," p. 27.
30. This response must clearly have made a mixed impression upon the vice governor. On the one hand, Russian authorities were pushing the Mennonites to become russified; on the other hand, the Mennonites' staunch adherence to the German language seemingly limited their proselytizing access to the Orthodox.
31. In his report of 9 April, the vice governor had named Jacob Kroeker and Wm. Neufeld as the founders of the *Allianz Haus*. But, he stated, although it had been established for the purpose of allowing all faith groups to preach there, it had in fact been given to the Baptist preachers for full usage – "Russian ones like Vyazon-sky, Balikhin, and Rückenau [MB] ones, especially Heinrich Braun. He is a 1902 graduate of the Hamburg Baptist Seminary, came back to Russia as a preacher,

- afterwards buying a printing shop in Halbstadt and founded the book publishing and sales firm Raduga."
32. That both sides were aware of the fact that the 17 April and 17 October, 1905 Manifestos had changed the rules of the game, both in terms of the establishment and control over new schools – perhaps even seminaries or sectarian theological training schools – is made clear early on in one of the Taurida governor's first letters to the Ministry of Internal Affairs regarding the evangelical Molokan seminary in Astrakhanka. There the governor wrote: "Then, later I have done some studying of the Manifesto of 17 April, 1905, where I discovered the sectarians were only allowed to open elementary schools. In accordance with this the Council of Ministers, through the Ministry of National Education, asked the State Council to develop a project for the laws governing these elementary schools. It is true, however, that the 17 October Manifesto permits these sectarians to open schools, yet in the light of the 17 April Manifesto, I do not believe that this means all schools, but only primary ones. Also, before the publication of the law, the sectarians were not allowed to have any schools at all, no elementary, middle or higher schools. Thus the only schools they can now be allowed would be elementary ones. With this in mind, I have walked into the Regional Office on 6 October, 1908 and told the Chancellery there that I doubt one can legally allow the opening of such a seminary, especially since they were going to train preachers and presbyters there. On 12 June, 1909 the Regional Office reported that in the 1908, No. 8 issue of a Baptist magazine, preacher Balikhin openly discussed the training of preachers in Astrakhanka, which led the office to conclude that this institution is not a teacher's seminary, but a theological one."
  33. Document No. 16.
  34. *Ibid.*
  35. *Ibid.*
  36. On Balikhin, "an energetic [Baptist] evangelist" and leader of the Russian Baptist Union, see Steeves, *Russian Baptist Union*, esp. pp. 51-56, and 75 etc.
  37. Document No. 16.
  38. *Ibid.*
  39. On Walter Jack, see Anna & Maria Kroeker, *Ein Reiches Leben*: 78-79.
  40. Document No. 20.
  41. *Ibid.*
  42. See Steeves, *Russian Baptist Union*: 55. On pages 75 to 76 Steeves writes: "The evident success of the Baptists in attracting converts alarmed the Orthodox Church whose missionary organ viewed the Baptist advance as 'not an accidental birth of religious discontent, but an organized, planned-to-the-details crusade on the Orthodox Church.' When Pedor Balikhin went to Elisavetgrad in 1908, he obtained from the governor of Kherson Province permission to hold special meetings 'about the love and mercy of God.' The presence of the famous Baptist preacher brought Baptists from about the region to Elisavetgrad, where the meeting place overflowed with people. On the morning of the first day, Balikhin opened with a 'brief word about freedom of religion and a prayer of thanksgiving for permission for the meeting.' After evangelistic sermons by Balikhin and another preacher, 'the meeting was ended by a loud "Hurrah" in honor of the Sovereign Emperor.' The session in the evening of the same day, however, was interrupted by the entrance of an Orthodox missionary, Father Kirik, who broke into Balikhin's reading of St. Paul's epistle to the Corinthians, saying to the audience: 'I have come in order to protect you from evil influence. You have heard here from the Baptist orator that the manifesto of 17 October gave them religious free-



dom. But this does not mean they have the right to hold meetings and exert influence by their sermons against the ruling Orthodox faith. Thus, this meeting is ended.”

43. Document No. 20.
44. "Rückenau," *ME*, IV: 375.
45. Document No. 13.
46. Document No. 20.
47. Document No. 22.
48. *Ibid.*
49. Document No. 26.
50. Document No. 24.
51. Document No. 28.
52. Document No. 29.
53. Document No. 29.
54. It is interesting to note how a piece like H. J. Braun's "Mennonites or Baptists" can be taken from its historical context and enter upon a life of its own. In the 18 June, 1910 issue of the North American MB periodical, *Zionsbote*, it was reprinted under the title: "Mennoniten oder Baptisten: Ein geschichtlicher Nachweis von H. J. Braun, Prediger der 'Mennoniten-Brüder Gemeinde,'" pp. 5-6. In a note at the conclusion the editor wrote: "We have taken the above article from the *Friedensstimme* but have omitted the many references to sources from which Braun derived his proofs. He presents much from Mennonite history and the article deserves to be read carefully. Unfortunately preacher Braun's Allianz perspective emanates from his last paragraph. The *Friedensstimme* derives a handsome profit from its [Allianz] advertisements, and this colors the paper. And so it remains true: 'Whose bread I eat, his song I sing.' To be sure, the leaders of the 'churchly' Mennonites completely reject any working together, yet to work against one another is not biblical. And we readily admit that there exists in their midst, amongst those whom we know, some true and living Christianity; but if that is the case we can always work alongside one another," p. 6.
55. In a letter to Peter Braun of 24 May, 1914 dealing with the consultation in Neuhalbstadt of 11-12 April, 1914 on the Sect/Confession issue, a friend, who identified himself as "Andres" and was clearly a member of the Old Church, observed, regarding the above exchange: "At that time I felt sorry for your esteemed brother H. Braun (when he allowed himself to be misled to enter into a passionate polemic – in the most innocent meaning of the word – with D. Epp in the pages of the *Botschafter* over certain historical events). How unbiased one must be to be so shortsighted." *Peter J. Braun Correspondence*.
56. Abe J. Dueck, *Moving Beyond Secession*: 117.
57. *Ibid.*
58. Bekker, *Origin*: 68-69, makes it very clear that Johann Claassen "received information *and a booklet on baptism by immersion*," from the Baptists in St. Petersburg. And it was this booklet that determined their new form of baptism as Bekker affirmed, stating: "When Heinrich Bartel and I had finished studying the booklet [given them by Claassen], we were both fully convinced that in the old church we had not been served by scriptural baptism. In addition, what was called 'baptism' had been administered to us while we were yet unconverted, before we had attained a true, living faith. We considered this inadequate before God. We came to believe that we must first receive the scriptural baptism ourselves, now that we were converted, before we baptized others," pp. 71-72.
59. A. Rauschenbusch, *Die Entstehung der Kindertaufe im dritten Jahrhundert n.*

*Chr. und die Wiedereinführung der biblischen Taufe* (Hamburg, 1898): 117-128. The chapter is entitled: "Die erfolgreiche Wiedereinführung der biblischen Taufe, durch die Baptisten, im Jahre 1641."

60. *Ibid*: 123.

61. That this adamant position bothered many an Old Church Mennonite can be seen by a poignant passage in David H. Epp's catechetical *Erläuterungen*. There, on page 162, he wrote: "But let us now return to the issue of baptism itself. Many a soul in our midst has already been tortured by the question, **which form of baptism (pouring or immersion) is the correct one**, and whether one may not have overlooked something here that could lead to the destruction of our souls. [But Epp had found consolation in Keller's histories, for he continued:] Our forefathers in the distant past, the Waldensian congregations, did not make a fundamental issue out of it as the famous researcher of ancient history, Dr. Keller, proves: 'to be sure they most often performed the holy act of baptism through sprinkling, although isolated instances of immersion can be shown to have occurred; in this regard they allowed the desire of the candidate to be determinative.' . . ."

62. "What is required in this respect at baptism from a baptismal candidate? In one instance, apparently very little: only faith; in another, however, immeasurably much since baptism conditions faith! Naturally, there can be no talk of a dead, merely spoken faith; even a strong historical faith is not enough. Only and alone a true, saving faith that reaches into the depths, warms and transforms the heart, the kind of faith whose first and most immediate fruit and consequence is repentance . . ." But then follows the statement that if only a small part of this faith – "ein Teilchen" (a particle) – exists in the heart, it is enough for baptism. Thereupon Epp observes: "Those are in great error therefore who declare that baptism can only take place after one has achieved a perfect conversion . . ." *Erläuterungen*: 116.

63. Old Church Mennonites revisited this theme time and again in their conferences. How much faith was necessary for baptism? In the 1886 conference, resolution # 8, it is addressed; again in the May, 1899 conference, resolution # 6; and then once more in the September, 1899 conference, resolution # 4. Ediger, *Beschluss*: 22, 39, 81.

64. See my *Thomas Muentzer, A Destroyer of the Godless*: 53-72.

65. There Lenzmann wrote: "In accordance with Matthew 13: 24-30 we believe that even such persons as are not members of the body of Christ, persons who do not possess a true faith, may be found in a Christian church. Therefore we allow everyone, who has been baptized upon his publicly confessed faith and does not live in open and apparent sin, to partake of Holy Communion. The secessionists teach, however: 'Holy Communion may only be extended to the truly believing.' They therefore call the communion services in our congregations a devil's service." *MBI*, X, # 4 (July, 1863): 51.

66. Heinrich Dirks, *Das Reich Gottes im Lichte der Gleichnisse* (Gnadenfeld: P. Janzen, 1892). This was a favorite theme of German Pietists in general and of Fabri in particular. See my *History and Renewal*: 50-57.

67. There Augustine argued in response that since the church had become "universal" and now covered the world, the "field" had to be interpreted as representing the church.

68. Dirks, *Das Reich Gottes*: 22. The year this booklet appeared, the 1892 Old Church Mennonite General Conference, by resolution # 11, commended Dirks' *Reich Gottes* to all the churches. H. Ediger, *Beschlüsse*: 48.

69. *MBI*: X, # 4 (July, 1863): 54. In his 16 November, 1932 letter to his brother Abra-

ham, Peter Braun wrote apropos the corruption of the Russian Mennonite Church prior to 1860: "You have dealt only very superficially with the causes that led to the founding of the Mennonite Brethren Church. But they were of the greatest importance for the entire movement; indeed, they were decisive. It is therefore necessary to discuss them more fully. To do so is more important than to describe the later development. You deny an internal decay of the congregations before 1860. But that decay cannot be denied since it was most decidedly present. I think Friesen has presented enough evidence to prove the case. But I can add new and important material to confirm its presence, evidence until now unknown, evidence no one but I probably knows about.

"The Molotschna Agricultural Society required school teachers to turn in a written report on a topic determined by the society every year. In 1856 (that is four years before the emergence of the Mennonite Brethren Church) it had the teachers write a report on the topic: 'The Moral Condition of the Molotschna Inhabitants from an Impartial Perspective.' (Please note the topic and that it was the Agricultural Society, a secular organization that determined the topic!) Thirty seven of these reports have been preserved in the Agricultural Society's archive. I have read and made notes on all of them. There is virtual agreement among all the writers in presenting a portrayal of the conditions then prevailing as completely repulsive. The following are some of the catch-words I noted down [as I read the reports]:

"Coarseness; crudeness; insolence; obstinacy; drunkenness; swearing; despicable acts; quarreling; deceit in business; Psalm 14, 2-3: 'The Lord looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, and who seek God. All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt: there is no one who does what is right, not even one.' Impertinent behavior everywhere: wild singing, dancing and boozing (it is customary to ridicule marriage in lecherous and adulterous verses); nightly escapades; outstanding personalities are leaders in immorality; members (of the church) openly and without hindrance indulge their vices; desecration of Sundays and holidays; empty churches and overflowing taverns; slandering and ridiculing of those better inclined.

"Bernhard Harder (at the time a teacher in Blumstein) wrote: 'The moral condition of the inhabitants of the Molotschna Mennonite district is in a sad state'; another wrote: 'the moral condition is immoral in the extreme'; others call the condition 'unsatisfactory, bad; on a very low level; decadent in all respects; in a miserable and ruined state; in a state of complete collapse.'

"These are not judgments from the 'brethren circle,' nor is this the judgment of a single person (who might exaggerate or be mistaken), but these are the assessments of teachers from the various villages whose objectivity in judgment we can trust. Nor did they have any reason to be biased in their assessments, especially since the Agricultural Society requested them to deliver an impartial verdict. Now if these contemporaries, who were themselves members of the church in question, speak of a 'complete collapse,' then we cannot simply say God protected the congregations from an internal decay. One cannot do that. Such a sentence cannot be proven. The opposite, however, can be. Therefore [your sentence] is historically invalid (false). We can only say that a moral collapse was undoubtedly present. Had it not been present a movement like the one manifested in the MB Church would not have been able to arise. For it did not contain anything foreign, anything coming in from without, anything brought in; rather it came to the surface from within. I see in the MB Church – even if only in a small way – nothing less than a reform movement, such as has arisen within the Christian

Church from time to time when the mother church becomes too shallow and worldly (the Cathars, Waldenses, Huguenots, the great Lutheran Reformation, etc.). Many things, for example the prohibition of drinking brandy, can only be explained by the conditions of the time, for they were a direct protest against the fact that every village had its own tavern and its notorious drunkards. That there were many others, who were pious and God-fearing, does not change matters and is meaningless in the context of the larger picture. Bernhard was only elected a minister in 1860; his activity therefore falls into the period following the birth of the MB Church."

70. H. Ediger, *Beschlüsse*: 30.
71. H. Dirks, "Etwas aus einem Diktat des seligen Missionsinspektors Dr. Friedrich Fabri," *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch* (Berdiansk: H. Ediger, 1908): 74-78. For a fuller description of Fabri and his theology, see my *History and Renewal*: 41-77, and the literature cited there.
72. H. Ediger, *Beschlüsse*: 39 & 81.
73. Epp's argument distinguishing between *Taufgesinnte* and Münsterite Anabaptists, based on Keller's research (pp. 125-126), was less than convincing, and, of course, in error. It was made to argue that whereas Münsterites were *Wiedertäufer* – rebaptizers – the *Taufgesinnte* had not been.
74. David H. Epp, "How is this Possible?" in A. J. Dueck, *Moving Beyond Secession*: 123-131. Peter P. Klassen, *Die Mennoniten in Paraguay*: 400-413, also makes this case for the various groups of Mennonites in Paraguay where only Russian Mennonites who had experienced the civil war, the revolution and the Communist takeover settled – except, of course, for the Canadian Mennonites who arrived a few years earlier. But they, too, according to Klassen, have now come under this influence, Klassen stating: "In any case, the process of change today has the support of the entire 'Mennonite Congregation in Menno.' As a result it is becoming increasingly similar to other Mennonite congregations in Paraguay. In general, the example of the Mennonite Brethren congregations has been followed. This will be discussed below," p.400.
75. There was more to this congress than met the eye. See note # 79 below.
76. David H. Epp, "Zum Congress der Evangelischen Christen in St. Petersburg," *Bt*, V, # 63 (31 August, 1910): 3-4.
77. David H. Epp, "Im Interesse der Wahrheit und Gerechtigkeit," (3<sup>rd</sup> part), V, # 83 (10 November, 1910): 2. If Epp was ignorant of the extent to which MBs were co-operating with Russian Stundists, Baptists, and Evangelical Christians in Russia's "dawning Reformation," what could others have known about it? This exchange makes clear that MBs were most secretive about their above involvement.
78. "Der Kongress der Evangel. Christen und Baptisten in St. Petersburg," *Bt*, V, # 72 (14 September, 1910): 3.
79. Abraham Kroeker, "Antwort auf den Artikel," *Bt*, V, # 79 (8 October, 1910): 3-4.
80. In the letter from "Andres" to Peter Braun of 24 May, 1914, the writer, an Old Church Mennonite from Nikolaipol, stated: "Do you, or you 'brothers' in the Molotschna, think that the 'true' Chortitzers have ever been less bloodthirsty than they are today [Epp was a 'Chortitzer']? That you have been less of an 'abomination' to them (according to P. M. Friesen) than you are today? If yes, then you are to be pitied!" *Peter J. Braun Correspondence*.
81. At least he thought he did. But apparently Epp knew nothing about the role P. M. Friesen had played in creating the Stundist-Evangelical Christian confession of faith, nor about the manner in which Prokhanov had modified it for the Russian Baptists. For, at the trial of E. Grositskaya in Kiev for propagating Stundism, the

Evangelical Christian attorney Ivan P. Kushernov requested P. M. Friesen to draw up a confession of faith that would reflect the beliefs of the Evangelical Christians. Coming only one year after Friesen had drawn up the 1902 MB Confession of Faith, the one written for Kushernov was a virtual Russian replication of the 1902 confession written in German. This confession was slightly revised by Prokhanov in 1908 and adopted at the Evangelical Christian Congress held in Ekaterinoslav in 1909. No wonder there was talk of union between the Russian Baptists, the Russian Evangelical Christians and the MBs. Epp, though he suspected something going on behind the scenes, apparently knew nothing about these matters. This information was sent me by Andrey Ivanov. The documents are contained in S. I. Golovaschenko & Yu. Reshetnikov, eds., *Istoriya Yevangelsko-Baptistskogo Dvizheniya na Ukraine. Materialy I Dokumenty*. Background and interpretation is given in S. N. Savinsky, P. D. Savchenko, & U. P. Dyck, eds., *History of Evangelical Christian-Baptists in the USSR* (Moscow, 1989). There therefore appears to have been much more to the connection between Russian Baptists and MBs than met the eye. No wonder that Russian Baptist congregations coming to California and Washington in the last 15 to 20 years have joined the MB Conference of Churches in the US.

82. David H. Epp, "Im Interesse der Wahrheit und Gerechtigkeit," *Bt*, V, # 83 (10 November, 1910): 2

## CHAPTER 8

1. H. van der Smissen, "Wie man über uns Mennoniten urteilt," *MBI*, # 8 (August, 1910): 68.
2. *Ibid*: 68-69.
3. H. van der Smissen, "Aus Russland," *MBI*, # 8 (August, 1910): 62-63.
4. *FrSt*, VIII, # 87 (6 November, 1910): 3-4.
5. H. Ediger, *Beschlüsse*: 137-140.
6. Resolution # 1 passed on the second day. Goerz, Epp and Braun were commissioned to present the explanation to the ministry and deal with any consequences that might result.
7. See especially the article written by Count Stolypin's brother in the *Novoe Vremia* quoted in the *FrSt*, VIII, # 6 (22 January, 1911): 9.
8. Report on the conference, *Bt*, VI, # 68 (30 August, 1911): 3.
9. *Ibid*: 3-4. After further discussion, the conference proceeded to elect permanent members to the *KfK* – four in number: H. J. Braun, David H. Epp, Abraham Klassen of Halbstadt, and Cornelius Unruh of Memrik.
10. "Die baptistische Weltkonferenz in Philadelphia vom 6. Bis 12. Juni d. J.," *FrSt*, IX, # 55 (20 June, 1911): 5.
11. "Wieder eine Verleumdung deutscher Kolonisten," *FrSt*, IX, # 79 (12 October, 1911): 4.
12. As Epp reported to the general conference in Nikolaipol, 17-19 October, 1912, this had been done in case the "project" was to be reintroduced in the Duma. *Bt*, VII, # 84 (26 October, 1912): 4.
13. "Protokoll der Beratung der Kommission in Glaubensangelegenheiten in dem Gemeindehause der Jekaterinoslawer Mennonitengemeinde am 5. Oktober 1911," *FrSt*, IX, # 79 (12 October, 1911): 6.
14. It was at this conference in Nikolaipol that the Commission received its permanent name, *Die Kommission für kirchliche Angelegenheiten*. To this point it had

- been called the *Kommission für Glaubensangelegenheiten*. For the sake of clarity we have referred to it as the *KfK* throughout. It was also at this conference that the tenure of its members was limited to five years.
15. Report of the Nikolaipol General Conference of 17-19 October, 1912, *Bt*, VII, # 84 (26 October, 1912): 4-5.
  16. Published by H. E. Ediger in Berdiansk, 1912, the document indicates that its publication was based on a decision reached by the General Conference at Nikolaipol held from 17-19 October, 1912.
  17. Beginning in 9 January, 1911, the *Friedensstimme* published a series of articles on the military service crisis of the 1870s consisting largely of documents and Mennonite delegate reports on the negotiations, entitled: "Reiseberichte und Bittschriften in Angelegenheit der Wehrlosigkeit der Mennoniten in Russland in den siebziger Jahren des vorigen Jahrhunderts," *FrSt*, IX, #5 (9 January, 1911): 4-7; IX, #7 (26 January, 1911): 4-7; IX, #9 (2 February, 1911): 4-6; IX, #11 (9 February, 1911): 4-6; IX, #12 (11 February, 1911): 5; IX, #15 (23 February, 1911): 4-6. The brochure's last section appears to have drawn heavily from these original sources and reports.
  18. Aside from the copy in the St. Petersburg archives, there appears to be no extant copy. Perhaps the Duma representatives, to whom it was addressed, eagerly absorbed all the copies. This document, perhaps more than any other, marks the shift away from P. M. Friesen as a major Russian Mennonite spokesperson to David H. Epp. It is his imprint that is on virtually every other document generated by Mennonites in this sect/confession debate.
  19. The use of such terminology may have been motivated by the attempt to make the Mennonite Church appear less "sectarian."
  20. The last paragraph appears to have been taken from the "Denkschrift über die Frage der Wehrlosigkeit der Mennoniten," printed in the first *Friedensstimme* installment on the 1873-74 negotiations with the Russian government. *FrSt*, IX, #5 (9 January, 1911): 5-6. These pious pronouncements were soon to be tested in a trial by fire from 1917 to 1924.
  21. David H. Epp, "Konfession oder Sekte," *Bt*, IX, #28 (11 April, 1914): 4.
  22. David H. Epp, "Konfession oder Sekte," *Bt*, IX, #30 (18 April, 1914): 3.
  23. "Resultate einer Beratung über die Frage der Konstituierung der Mennoniten Russlands als 'Evangelisch-Mennonitische Konfession,'" *Bt*, IX, #38 (13 May, 1914): 3. See also Abe J. Dueck, "Mennonites, the Russian State, and the Crisis of Brethren and Old Church Relations in Russia, 1910-1918," *MOR* 69, 4 (Oct. 1995): 453-485. Translations of these important documents are included in appendices.
  24. P. M. Friesen, *Konfession oder Sekte. Der Gemeinsame Konvent in Schönwiese am 7. März und die Kommission in Halbstadt am 11. u. 12. April, 1914* (Neuhalsstadt: Raduga, 1914).
  25. P. M. Friesen, *Konfession oder Sekte*: 6. An English translation is included in Abe J. Dueck, *Moving Beyond Secession*, pp. 142-157. It is apparent that Friesen, whose booklet appeared after the report in *Der Botschafter*, took this quotation and some other matters directly from the latter.
  26. In his pamphlet Friesen described the effect of Penner's statement as follows: "Br. Penner's declaration, in my opinion, had the effect of an exploding bomb." *Konfession oder Sekte*: 7. The report in *Der Botschafter* makes no comment.
  27. The wording is identical in both sources.
  28. P. M. Friesen, in his discussion, refers to the original article that described these events: "Bange Tage in Halbstadt," as "sadly somewhat one-sided," p. 8.
  29. On the corrupt state of the Orthodox Church in the Ukraine see Zhuk, *Russia's*

**Lost Reformation: 63-75.**

30. A further line of demarcation could be drawn here between local authorities and the Imperial Tsarist government in St. Petersburg. The attempt by the governor of Odessa in 1915 to arrest H. J. Braun, and his protection by high ranking members of the Tsarist government in St. Petersburg, stands as exemplary. When asked by the St. Petersburg official what the basis of his warrant of arrest was, the Odessa official refused to respond.
31. Peter Braun's friend from the Old Church writing to him in 1914 also believed that the "Chortizers" were poised to jump on the MBs all along, only the political conditions had not been right until this moment. He wrote: "Why was it possible after 1905 – let us say in 1910 at Schönsee – that an agreement could be reached which united all Mennonites even though it was precisely to that time [1910] that the greatest 'sins' had been committed against that which the Old Church today criticizes so severely, and what she accuses [the MBs] of doing above everything else – 'propaganda'! Why was this not then a hindrance to their 'working together,' and why is it today the only accusation they are not afraid to pronounce, the only one they formulate with clarity and precision, the only unpaid bill they wish to discuss? Because – the government also does not know anything more intelligent to do, or because one doesn't have any chance of getting anywhere with any other demand; that should be clear, my friend, should it not?" Clearly, from the writer's point of view – and this becomes even more obvious from the letter's opening – the Chortitza Mennonites were simply taking advantage of the government's action to vent their spleen against the MBs. Their hatred of the MBs had not subsided over the years. Note: *Konfession oder Sekte*:
32. Quite apparently, proselytizing lay at the heart of the problem for all three parties to the quarrel: the Russian government, the Old Church Mennonites, and the MBs. The government, as its response to David Dyck's request to be allowed to sponsor a "Bible discussion" on his Apenlee estate makes clear, trusted the Old Church Mennonites not to proselytize. Its response to Dyck, who funded the Philadelphia Tract Society, was: "The meeting at the Apenlee estate **can only be allowed if it is going to be supervised by the Old Mennonites, with the presence of Old Mennonite teachers** [my emphasis]." Peter J. Penner spoke for the vast majority of these Old Church Mennonites when he observed at the 12-14 April, 1914 Schönwiese Consultation: "The government forbids preaching among the adherents of the state religion. The Mennonites [Old Church] have observed this law for 125 years; therefore, the government must not be provided with an excuse to assume that Mennonites have become unfaithful to their principles." The MBs, on the other hand as Penner proceeded to note, had, from their very inception in 1860, been walking a fine line between compliance and defiance of the law. But in doing so even they were less aggressive than had been their Anabaptist forebears (see my "The Great Commission as Anabaptist Manifesto," in: Dale Schragg & James Juhnke, eds., *Anabaptist Visions for the New Millennium: A Search for Identity* (Kitchener, ON & Scottsdale, PA: Pandora Press & Herald Press, 2000): 175-180.

If, as has been repeatedly emphasized in the scholarly literature on the 16<sup>th</sup> century movement, the Anabaptists were aggressively missionary minded, where and when did they become the "Stillen im Lande" (the quiet in the land) who meekly submitted, without so much as a mild protest, to the Russian law on proselytizing when they entered the country? The answer lies in the agreements reached between Anabaptist/Mennonite groups in the early to late 17<sup>th</sup> century which brought them religious toleration. We may not yet know about all of these, but we do possess a large enough number to see an emerging pattern. For

example, in 1626 the Count of East Friesland, Rudolf Christian, granted the Mennonites in his territory a *Schutzbrief* (letter of protection) in which they were given protection and granted religious freedom – but upon certain conditions: first, they had to provide an annual, fiscal, per capita contribution above the normal; second, they were to exercise their religious freedom in secret; and third, they were not to carry on any proselytizing (see Müller, *Mennoniten in Ostfriesland*: 41, note 13). Virtually the same conditions were granted the Mennonites of Hamburg/Altona in 1641, only some fifteen years later by Christian IV of Denmark. In return for the king's goodwill and protection they were "all to live peacefully, lead a completely unobtrusive life not annoying to anyone, **and not dare to try to attract or entice anyone from our religion to their own . . .**" B. C. Roosen, *Geschichte der Mennoniten-Gemeinde zu Hamburg und Altona* (Hamburg: H. D. Versiehl, 1886): 38. Similar conditions were granted Swiss Mennonites in the Palatinate by Karl Ludwig in a 1664 *Scutzbrief* that stated: ". . . that they not allow anyone related or belonging to another religion to join their congregations, not say anything blasphemous, 'revolutionary,' or say or do anything derogatorily against the governing authorities, and on top of that refrain completely from rebaptizing . . . ." *ML*, II: 462.

The privileges granted Mennonites in Prussian lands by the Polish kings contained similar restrictions. Peter Klassen, *A Homeland for Strangers: An Introduction to Mennonites in Poland and Prussia* (Fresno: Center for MB Studies, 1989): 2, writes: "Various restrictions by Catholic and Protestant authorities made it clear that Mennonites did not enjoy the same status as did the 'official' religions. Thus, in most of this region Mennonites were not permitted to build churches until the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century . . . ."

"Numerous other stipulations demonstrated the subordinate role given to the Mennonites. **They were forbidden to gain converts from the state churches** [my emphasis]. Persons who disregarded this prohibition might be fined or subjected to other penalties . . . ." See also Mannhardt, *Die Wehrfreiheit*: 80-83, 90-91, 93-95, where three of these Polish *privilegia* are given in German translation. Latin originals are in the appendix.

The above should make it amply evident that by the time the Prussian/Polish Mennonites entered Russia that country's prohibition against proselytizing was no longer a problem for them; it had become an accepted part of their existence at least since the early part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. They knew well, when they entered Russia in 1789, that Catherine the Great's 22 July, 1763 Manifesto had stated: ". . . nevertheless, everyone is hereby warned not to try to persuade or mislead any fellow Christian living in Russia, under any circumstances whatsoever, either to accept or assent to his faith and his church, unless he wishes to expose himself to the full force of the punishment of our laws . . . ." Epp, *Chortitzer Mennoniten*: 7. Therefore when it came to stating their own desires to Prince Potemkin in 1887, they requested only the following: "That they be allowed to practice their religion unhindered in accordance with their church statutes and traditions." *Ibid*: 18. They uttered not a word regarding proselytizing; it was no longer an issue for them. Not until a spiritual revival took place in their midst in 1860 did Russian Mennonites – and not only MBs – seek to get around this restriction. And when the 17 April, 1905 Manifesto on religious toleration was issued a good number of them were once again awakened to the call of Christ's Great Commission. Their 1908 document on the topic makes this apparent enough.

33. P. M. Friesen, *Konfession oder Sekte*: 10. Obviously, at least some Mennonites still thought that the great *Privilegium* was dependent upon their promise not to pros-



elytize.

34. See Peter Braun's letter to Janzen of 25 February, 1927. *Peter J. Braun Correspondence*. Janzen's exact words were: "... Even so I am not in agreement with him and was not able to work together with him during my appointment in Moscow where I represented our – the Mennonites' – point of view because, after that three-month imprisonment, he made concessions to the Soviet government which I was not authorized to make – which my conscience also would not allow me to make in spite of the fact that I am a descendant of those Mennonites who once made the godless promise not to make any propaganda for Mennonitism, and in spite of the fact that I love the Mennonite Brethren Church, which, on the basis of the brother's counsel, decided to suspend temporarily its work amongst the Russians and which then also acted in accordance with this decision. Later, however, it would not forbid the believers in its midst to create, through their own initiative, organizations for the propagation of the Gospel among the Russians but not make any propaganda for Mennonitism as such. They did, however, preach Christ crucified and many workers who did so died a martyr's death." *MR* (29 December, 1926): 2.
35. Braun, as we have seen, was present at the Neuhaubstadt consultation and would undoubtedly have heard Friesen's reply and read his booklet later.
36. P. M. Friesen, *Konfession oder Sekte*: 10. In his letter to Janzen of 25 February, 1927, Braun wrote: "You say that so glibly; perhaps because you have heard it from others. If you can prove what you have said, I will retract what I have said. But tell me, my friend, who, where, and when made such a promise? And where is it confirmed [that such a promise was made]? I would like to ask if such a promise was ever made. I, for my part, doubt it, for no document has ever crossed my hands that said anything about it. The only document known to me in which such a missionary activity was mentioned is Catherine II's Manifesto. It is well known that she directed two manifestos to foreign settlers. The first of 4 December, 1762 was very general and elicited no response. Therefore a second was issued on 22 July, 1763 in which the various incentives which were to be offered were listed. This latter one contains a statement that it is forbidden to recruit proselytes from among the confessors of the Christian churches. But a prohibition from one side does not, by a long shot, amount to a promise on the other. As far as the Mennonites are concerned, they immigrated twenty-five years later and not specifically on the basis of this manifesto but on the basis of a special agreement with the Russian government. This agreement, which was submitted on 5 July, 1787 and confirmed by the empress on 7 September, 1787, enumerates, in 20 points, the conditions under which Mennonites wished to immigrate. Missions (proselytizing) is not so much as mentioned in any one of them. To be sure, the Russian government had no need to require such a promise from the Mennonites, for the prohibition was enshrined in a legal statute, and whoever transgressed it became liable to punishment. To take another example: every country has a law against theft. But no state would think of eliciting a promise not to steal from its immigrants.

"That being the case, where does this talk among us come from that our forefathers made such a promise? I for my part believe that it first arose at the time when the Mennonite Brethren began to participate in the evangelization efforts among the Russians. I say, began to participate, for, a few exceptions (...) notwithstanding, she never carried on an independent work on her own. The work she did consisted, did it not, primarily in supporting the Russian brethren morally and financially. [I will give] just one example here. When, in recent

- times as also during the war, the government began to reproach us because of our imperfect mastery of the Russian language, the argument circulated amongst us that we had earlier been forbidden to learn Russian. Even trustworthy persons asserted this. To determine the truth of this statement I searched my archive from top to bottom but could only find the contrary, that is that the government, at least since the 1820s, insistently demanded that the Mennonites should learn Russian. And so it goes. — In brief, the sense of my long speech is this: we should not wish to make our forebears look worse than they actually were.”
37. Indeed, precisely such a charge has been brought against the Russian MBs by Baptist historians, Albert Wardin and others, as we have seen.
  38. See Abe J. Dueck, *Moving Beyond Secession*: 132-136.
  39. David H. Epp, “Konfession oder Sekte,” *Bt*, IX, #38 (13 May, 1914): 2-3.
  40. Ein Laie, “Konfession oder Sekte,” *Bt*, IX, #40 (20 May, 1914): 3.
  41. *Ibid*: 3-4.
  42. “Konfession oder Sekte,” *Bt*, IX, #43 (30 May, 1914): 4.
  43. Lichtenauer Bruderschaft, “Konfession oder Sekte,” *Bt*, IX, #48 (17 June, 1914): 3.
  44. *FrSt*, (14 May, 1914): 2-5.
  45. See A. H. Unruh, *Mennoniten-Brüdergemeinde*: 309-314.

## CHAPTER 9

1. D. Rempel to C. Henry Smith, *C. Henry Smith Collection*. The letter served as a kind of cover-letter to an untranslated typed copy of Braun’s 1914 Russian document.
2. A. A. Friesen, “Betrachtungen über die gegenwärtige Lage der Mennoniten in Russland und die Aussichten für eine Auswanderung.” *A. A. Friesen Papers*: MS. 60, #101. In his *Die Auswanderung*, p. 528d, Unruh reproduced a memorandum written by a D. Dyck, then in Berlin, representing the Kuban Mennonites, dated 8 May, 1922, in which the latter asserted: “Up to the year 1918 there existed a flourishing prosperity in all these colonies even though everything had been done since the beginning of the war to undermine and even ruin their prosperity. It was for the latter purpose that the notorious land liquidation laws of December, 1914 and February, 1915 were passed.” The writer has the months turned around and the years wrong.
3. John B. Toews, *Selected Documents*: 299. In a particularly poignant letter written by B. B. Janz to the Canadian government of 23 December, 1921 appealing to be allowed entry into Canada on behalf of the Russian Mennonites, Janz wrote: “To be sure, we experienced repeated hostile attacks from the Russian populace, and when, in the 1880s, the attempts at Russification in the schools and civil society began, it became clear to us that we were not considered natives. Through petitions to St. Petersburg, however, we were always able to make things right again. But in the last seven years this enmity has been sealed against us and has taught us that we can no longer stay here. The lesson has been a difficult and bitter one, but it cannot be misunderstood.” *A. A. Friesen Papers*.
4. Cornelius Bergmann, “Die Lage der Mennoniten in Russland,” *MBI*, #2 (February, 1915): 11. The piece must have been written shortly after the outbreak of World War I. Bergmann would seem to have been in error on this last point, however, at least according to the following: Horst Penner, *Ansiedlung mennonitischer Niederländer im Weichselmündungsgebiet der Mitte des 16. Jahrhundert bis zum Beginn der preussischen Zeit* (Weierhof/Pfalz: Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein,

- 1940): 19; B. H. Unruh, *Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe*: 112, 127, 190; and, Johan Sjouke Postma, *Das niederländische Erbe der preussisch-russländischen Mennoniten in Europa, Asien und Amerika* (Leeuwarden: A. Jongbloed c.v., 1959): 163. Yet, in light of the recent research into Nazi influenced scholarship during 1933-1945, even this argument may have been predetermined by guidelines laid down by party functionaries. On this issue see the following: Michael Burleigh, *Germany Turns Eastward. A Study of Ostforschung in the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), and Michael Fahlbusch, *Wissenschaft im Dienst der nationalsozialistischen Politik?* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1999).
5. "... But after the war [1904-05], our diplomacy faced abruptly about and definitely entered upon the road toward rapprochement with England. France was drawn into the orbit of British policy, there was formed a group of powers of the Triple Entente, with England playing the dominant part; and a clash, sooner or later, with the powers grouping themselves around Germany became inevitable." Frank Alfred Golders, ed., *Documents of Russian History 1914-1917* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1964): 5, trans. by Emanuel Aronsberg.
  6. Mehlinger & Thompson, *Count Witte*: 239.
  7. Serge Sazonov, *Fateful Years, 1909 - 1916* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1928): 32-33.
  8. See note # 28 below. The timing of the bill, coming immediately on the heels of the Balkan Crisis, cannot have been coincidental.
  9. On the problem of "empire" versus "nation" in Russian history, see the following: Edward C. Thaden, *Russia's Western Borderlands, 1710 - 1870* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Theodore R. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863 - 1914* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996); and Robert P. Geraci, *Window on the East: Nationalism and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2001).
  10. Thaden, *Western Borderlands*: 59.
  11. *Ibid.*
  12. *Ibid.*: 17.
  13. Quotation from Weeks, *Nation and State*: 97.
  14. *Ibid.*
  15. *Ibid.*: 71.
  16. *Ibid.*: 98.
  17. See Weeks, *Nation and State* for a full analysis. Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire*: 6, writes: "Until the late nineteenth century, Russification aimed to facilitate a more efficient administration, but by the 1880s it turned more sharply toward cultural assimilating minorities to remake the imperial state into a more homogenous, more national state. But the leading recent studies of Russification and of Russian nationalism take pains to point out how limited and contradictory these efforts were in practice." See also Paul Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy*: 133 - 136; and Theodore R. Weeks, "National Minorities in the Russian Empire," Anna Geifman, ed., *Russia under the Last Tsars: Opposition in the Russian Empire 1894 - 1917* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999): 110 - 134.
  18. As, for example, among the subject Poles: see Weeks, *Nation and State*: 32 - 35.
  19. Peter Braun, *Schulrat*: 86.
  20. H. J. Braun, "Das Schulwesen unserer deutsch-evangelischen Stammesbrüder": 8 & 12. *H. J. Braun Nachlass*.
  21. Once again, H. J. Braun: "This battle demonstrated yet once again how blessed is the unity of brothers and how beneficial a deeply persuaded and tenacious adher-

- ence to one's religious principles and mother tongue can be for a people living in an alien country." *Ibid*: 12.
22. Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire*: 5.
  23. Sazonov, *Fateful Years*: 48-49. Sazonov describes his and Russia's perspective on these matters in detail as well as Russia's growing estrangement from Germany after 1909.
  24. Robert W. Coonrod, "The Duma's Attitude toward War-time Problems of Minority Groups," *The American Slavic and East European Review*, Vol. XIII, # 3 (February, 1954): 45. See also Ipatov, *Mennoniten*: 42-43, where the author argues that Russian Mennonites were considered Germans during the war because of the war hysteria.
  25. In a 26 January, 1938 essay entitled, "Praktische Fragen," Unruh wrote: "Nor did the Mennonites settle on individual farms, but rather in villages. Economic, cultural and ecclesiastical considerations all played a role in the creation of such isolated settlements. Mennonites saw the need to establish primary herds of cattle and therefore maintained a common pastureland. They desired to facilitate a uniform upbringing and edification, they therefore avoided being scattered and immediately built schools and churches." *Bote* (26 January, 1938), #4: 1. Clearly, Unruh is reading his later views into this earlier period.
  26. Johann Willms, in an article in *Der Bote* of 1925 quoted by Unruh, *Die Auswanderung*, pp. 427-429, wrote: "Our colonial privileges included a strong isolation of our settlements from other peoples in our neighborhoods. All communication with the government took place through government agencies and in our German language. This isolation lasted until the 1870s; even the demand for workers was at first largely filled from within our own ranks; only with the substantial increase in grain growing were Russian seasonal workers brought in. The system of land distribution, the indivisible farm system, the separate administration with its own language as official language, school, and confession – all these things kept us away from any contact with the surrounding world, not to speak of assimilation. It was for these reasons that our development was unrestricted, unlike the native peoples who were constrained by their communal property laws, ignorance, dishonesty, cultivation methods, and to a degree by the serfdom which in some respects still affected them."
  27. Benjamin H. Unruh, "The Mennonites of Russia," *MQR*, XI, #1 (January, 1937): 62.
  28. B. B. Janz, report to the *Studienkommission der Mennoniten Süd-Russlands im Ausland*, 7 May, 1922. *B. B. Janz Papers*. CMBS, Winnipeg. Of all the persons involved in these events (he was a member of the *Studienkommission*), A. A. Friesen appears to have been the only one of a handful who recognized that such Mennonite enclaves had become impossible in the modern states. In his manuscript he wrote: "The independent existence of small national minorities seems, at least to me, to be impossible in a modern state. The great powers of today theorize about it, even enunciate high sounding principles, which they, however, never seem to apply . . ." Friesen, "Betrachtungen," p. 9. The Siberian Mennonites, in a letter to the pastor of the Mennonite Church in Amsterdam of 12 January, 1921 seeking help in settling in a Dutch colony, very consciously stated that they hoped to settle in Surinam on individual, American style, farms. "Ein Brief aus Sibirien an den Pastor der Mennoniten-gemeinde in Amsterdam, Holland," *MR* (27 April, 1921): 13.
  29. See the documents in both Epp, *Die Chortitzer Mennoniten*: 6-9, and Peter Braun, *Kto takie Mennonity*.

30. Quoted in Peter P. Klassen, "Das russländische Erbe der Mennoniten in Lateinamerika," *Jahrbuch für Geschichte und Kultur der Mennoniten Paraguay*, vol. I (November, 2000): 12. Klassen argues that it is this system of landholding transferred to Paraguay that is the main reason for being able to perpetuate the closed colony system in Paraguay.
31. *Ibid*: 19-20.
32. *Ibid*: 18-20.
33. See note #6 above. But this scholarship may be suspect.
34. Bergmann observed: "Even the colonists in Russia, where they lived next door to the immigrants from Württemberg, Hessen, Saxony and Prussia, and with whom they shared the important aspect of their *Deutschtum*, were unable to bring about any closer contacts . . . ." "Die Lage der Mennoniten," p. 11.
35. Friesen, "Betrachtungen": p.2. Jacob H. Janzen remarked: ". . . we lived under separate laws which had been granted us without our request by the Russian government in order to make it impossible for us to proselytize for our faith among non Mennonites . . . ."
36. Unruh, *Die Auswanderung*: 2.
37. In his manuscript on the *KfK* requested by the Bluffton historian, C. Henry Smith, Jacob H. Janzen indeed asserted that the Russian government had tried to make Orthodox Christians of them, saying: "The founding of the *KfK* became necessary when the Russian Czarist Government began in all earnestness to proceed with its scheme to russificate all non-Russians, *to quench their religious beliefs and to force them into the Greek Orthodox Church, the State Church of Russia*. It then was the commission of the *KfK* to ward off the disaster by constant negotiations with the government and by shielding our educational institutions from the attacks of the same. And the *KfK* can justly boast of great achievements during that period of time. While the government kept our schools under painfully close scrutiny and watched us that we would not teach our young people too much, our educational institutions grew and prospered at a rate that had no precedent in our history. As far as our faith was concerned, everybody grew more conscious of it the more the government exerted itself to drag it from our hearts" [my emphasis], p. 1. As a teacher and preacher, Jansen should have known what he was talking about.
38. At least Ehrh viewed himself at the time as the first to do so.
39. Adolf Ehrh, *Die Mennoniten in Russland*: 25-28. Ehrh even cited Russian documents and Russian historians to prove his case.
40. Peter Braun, *Kto takie Mennonity*. The original of this document was housed in the Chortitza archives. There can be little doubt that Mennonites were aware of the passage that singled them out as possible model farmers. But how did they interpret it? They did speak of their "Musterwirtschaften," but, with the exception of Johann Cornies, they do not seem to have felt obligated to go beyond setting examples, that is to assist their Russian neighbors in improving their agricultural methods.
41. Mennonites like D. H. Epp, perhaps the best student of Russian Mennonite history at the time, argued that this had never been a condition of their entry into the country.
42. Terry Martin, "The German Question in Russia, 1848-1899," *Russian History / Histoire Russe*, 18, No. 4 (1991): 396.
43. Perhaps the "Guardian Committee" was created precisely because the Russian government recognized that Mennonites *could* serve as examples to others settled in Russia. At any rate, whereas the first Mennonite settlers requested that Trappe -

- who had been so instrumental in their coming to Russia – remain as their liaison to the Russian government after their arrival, the creation of a Guardian Committee to oversee the development of the colonies only came later, in 1800.
44. Martin, "German Question," p. 399.
  45. See also John M. Thompson, *A Vision Unfulfilled: Russia and the Soviet Union in the Twentieth Century* (Lexington, Massachusetts, Toronto: D. C. Heath & Co., 1996): 24-25.
  46. Bergmann, "Mennoniten in Russland," p. 10.
  47. Mehlinger & Thompson, *Count Witte*: 236-240, however, argue that the massive loan the Russian government under Witte arranged from the French government turned her away from Germany to France, saying: "But, driven by his conviction of the importance of the loan to Russia, Witte took steps and offered guarantees which led Russia ultimately from the Bjorko romance with Germany to a hardened position as a member of the Triple Entente against the Tripole Alliance. Thus, the effect of the loan was to estrange Russia from Germany, to shatter Witte's dreams of a grand continental alliance, to bind Russia even more tightly to France, and to help pave the way for the Anglo-Russian Entente," p. 239.
  48. Friesen, "Betrachtungen," p. 2. See also Terry Martin, "German Question"; Fred C. Koch, *The Volga Germans in Russian and the Americas, from 1763 to the Present* (University Park, PA: Penn State U. Press, 1977): 239-257; and James W. Long, *Privileged to Dispossessed*: 192-245.
  49. "Wie steht es bei unseren russischen Brüdern," *MBI*, #9 (September, 1906): 70.
  50. Terry Martin, *The Mennonites and the Russian State Duma*: 45. A note on this measure appeared in the 27 July, 1910 (p. 10) issue of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. It stated: "Apparently a period of toleration for Russia's Jews has arrived. At the same time, however, the government has introduced a measure to limit the ownership of land by foreigners in its south-western regions. The measure is directed against the German colonists who are Russian subjects and have lived in the region for 200 years. Through their industry, their extensive land acquisition, and their faithful retention of *das Deutschtum* the colonists have made themselves unloved. The government even declares quite openly in the memorandum that the German colonists are pan-Germans who have no ties to Russia. They drove the Russian people out [of the region] and pose a great danger in case of war. *Novoe Vremia* goes even further, declaring that the German government and German banks are supporting the colonists from strategic motives, and that German consulates are at pains to foster an all-German spirit among the colonists. These appear to be the motives behind the government's measure. And it anticipates a total prohibition of rented land or land acquisition by German colonists in the organization of Russian subjects (Untertanenverband). The measure applies to the governments of Kiev, Podolia, and Volynia. The Russian Knovnoitzing Press demands that the law be extended to Poland, the Baltic region, and the great Northwest. The moment that the more favorable condition of the German arouses the jealousy of the lazy Russian, the important role they have played in the development of Russia is forgotten."
  51. Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire*: 1.
  52. *Ibid*: 3.
  53. On the extent of the government's actions, see Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire*.
  54. "Die Leiden der deutschstämmigen Kolonisten in Russland in den Jahren des Weltkrieges 1914 – 1917.
  55. Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire*: 6.

## CHAPTER 10

1. In his "Der Kampf der russischen Gemeinden und die Wehrlosigkeit," of 1925 Benjamin Unruh wrote: "Instantaneously the World War broke out, the congregations felt that their privileged position with respect to military service could not help but put them in a most precarious position. Millions had no alternative but to answer the call of the Fatherland; Mennonite youths and young men were allowed to remain at home and pursue their customary activities. Already during the Russo-Japanese War the congregations had the distinct feeling that they would have to perform some kind of alternative service; they had therefore aided the families of Russian servicemen in a grand manner . . ." *Bote* (2 September, 1925): 5.
2. "Protokoll der Beratung des Molotschna Mennonitischen Kirchenkonvents in Gemeinschaft der beiden Volostältesten, des Bevollmächtigten in Forsteiangelegenheiten und einiger anderer Personen im Bethause zu Halbstadt am 22. Juli 1914," *FrSt*, XII, #58 (26 July, 1914): 3. An appeal to the churches to implement the above recommendations was contained in the same issue, indeed on the same page.
3. Aaron A. Toews, *Mennonitische Märtyrer der jüngsten Vergangenheit und der Gegenwart* (Winnipeg: Christian Press, 1949), article on "David Iwanowitsch Classen," p. 87.
4. H[einrich] E[pp], "Aus dem Leben der Chortitzer Mennonitengemeinden während der Kriegszeit," *MBI*, #7 (July, 1918): 50-51. In his "My Life," p. 10, John Esau wrote: ". . . At this time, the Mennonites were mobilized in Ekaterinoslav. To begin with, there were 12,000 men. For our part, we were only allowed to employ 2,000 men and I was very pleased to have such excellent personnel . . ." Esau was in charge of Red Cross operations in the region during the war.
5. In a memorandum submitted to the English government toward the end of 1920, Unruh wrote: "From the 100,000 living Mennonites in Russia not less than 12,000 have done service during the European war in hospitals and in the forests. This service was much appreciated by the government." *Die Auswanderung*: 293a.
6. Some articles in the *Press Review* were placed there by government officials and were intended to serve official purposes.
7. Reel No. 16, Document No. 10, Fond No. 821, Opis No. 150, Dielo No. 66, Request No. 37, CSHAofR. In his "Kampf um die Wehrlosigkeit" Unruh reported: ". . . Already in the first month of the war representatives of the congregations were ordered by telegram to appear in St. Petersburg in order to determine the nature of their service during the war. The negotiations were carried on under heavy pressure, even so the government decided not to touch the Mennonite privileges . . ." *Bote* (2 September, 1925): 5.
8. Document No. 11: *Ibid.*
9. Document No. 12: *Ibid.*
10. Document No. 13: *Ibid.*
11. Document No. 14: *Ibid.*
12. James Urry, "Russian Mennonites and the Boers of South Africa: A Forgotten Connection," *Mennonite Historian*, XX, No. 3 (September, 1994): 1-2. Throughout the early exploration of possible emigration destinations by the *Studienkommission* a considerable amount of attention was in fact directed to South Africa. In one of his reports to Benjamin Unruh, for example, A. A. Friesen wrote: "The

- prospects in South Africa appear to have become more favorable. We were recently informed by the *Zuid afrikanischen Vereeniging in Holland* that they had published a number of articles about the Ukrainian Mennonites in the Dutch Boer Press of South Africa; copies were included. We are of the opinion that, if the trip to P[araguay] comes to fruition, the same delegation should also visit South Africa." B. H. Unruh, *Die Auswanderung*: 276-277. In 1913, probably in dependence upon P. M. Friesen, Johann Klassen, teacher in Ekaterinoslav, wrote in his "Die Mennoniten in Preussen im 16., 17. und 18. Jahrhundert": "... 125 years ago the first Mennonites migrated to Russia from the above-named region [East and West Prussia]. The later Mennonite immigrants also all came from Prussia. Aside from that, of course, we know that, according to our [national] descent, **we are mostly Hollanders**. Many of our names point directly to our Dutch origin; others, however, point to a Slavic origin [my emphasis]." *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch* (Berdiansk: H. Ediger, 1913): 45. Klassen proceeded to cite the authorities for his assertions: 1) Max Schoen, *Das Mennonitentum in Preussen*; 2) P. M. Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*; 3) Christine Hege, *Kurze Geschichte der Mennoniten*; and 4) C. H. Wedel, vol. III of his *Geschichte der Mennoniten*.
13. K. Lindemann, *Von den deutschen Kolonisten*: 40. When had H. J. Braun prepared the list, before his escape to St. Petersburg?
  14. Document No. 16, Reel 16, Fond No. 821, Opis No. 133, Dielo No. 319, Request No. 37, CSHAofR. In his *Kto takie Mennonity*, Peter Braun himself wrote: "It should not be assumed that the Russian Mennonites have only now been reminded of their Dutch origin. It is true that they never paid much attention to it, nor was there any need to do so; but this awareness has always been there and surfaced from time to time. For example, during the Boer War in South Africa (1899-1902), Mennonites often spoke of their Dutch origin and their kinship with the Boers. At times they even liked to call themselves "Boers" (in the vernacular, "Buren" means "Bauer" or farmer), and they followed the course of military affairs in South Africa with the greatest interest." Ipatov confirms Braun's statement when he writes: "... The Mennonites' own conception of their national identity was, at that time, forced into the background by religion and compensated for by their confessional membership to such an extent that they regarded what they were called as unimportant; that is, as long as the question of nationality was not confronted by the catastrophe of their economic interests." *Mennoniten*: 46.
  15. Peter J. Dyck, *Troubles and Triumphs 1914 - 1924* (Springstein, MB: 1981): 12, writes: "Preacher (MB minister) Heinrich Braun and Elder Heinrich Unruh each spoke briefly to the reservists."
  16. *Der Botschafter*, IX, #65 (15 August, 1914): 3.
  17. "Russische Pressestimmen. 'Die Deutschen und das Land,'" *Bt*, IX, #84 (21 October, 1914): 4.
  18. In his appeal of 23 December, 1921 to the Canadian government B. B. Janz noted the relationship between the government's attack on the Mennonites and the increase in hatred among the Russian populace toward them in the following words: "With the outbreak of the war with Germany in 1914 the hatred of the upper classes made itself visibly apparent, the more so since the initiative for it came from the throne itself. It found its most pointed expression in the land liquidation laws directed toward those of German and Austrian descent, which began in December, 1915 . . ." *A. A. Friesen Papers*. In his posthumously published *A Mennonite Family*: 167, David Rempel writes, confirming the above: "The anti-colonist sentiment that was sown among the peasants by the government during the war was to bear bitter fruit for everyone. Some saw clearly the peril that



would come. In 1915 to 1916, liberal and leftist members of the Duma repeatedly discussed the possibility that the land liquidation decrees would trigger pogroms against the colonists, and that there would be a new form of the bloody Pugachev terror, with consequences just as frightful as those attending the peasant upheaval in the Volga region during the reign of Catherine II. These predictions proved true. Paul Miliukov, the liberal leader of the Kadet party reportedly quoted a peasant spokesman in Saratov region as saying that if the government failed to expropriate the lands of the colonists and distribute them among the peasants, they themselves would one day cut colonists' throats and seize their properties . . . ."

19. Durnovo, in his February, 1914 memorandum to Nicholas II, referred to the same law but interpreted it quite differently, stating: "Indeed, the German Government made such strenuous efforts to preserve the connection between its emigrants and their old fatherland that it adopted even the unusual method of tolerating dual citizenship. It is certain, however, that a considerable proportion of German emigrants definitely and irrevocably settled in their new homes, and slowly broke their ties with the old country . . . ." Golder, *Documents*: 16.

Nevertheless, this 1870 law was somehow to prove the unreliability of the German colonists and justify the liquidation of their lands. Had the Russian government interpreted the law correctly? In 1873 the new federal German government, in an attempt to bring uniformity to the citizenship laws of the various German states, and building upon an 1869 North Confederation law, declared citizenship to be established through descent: (*ius sanguinis*, the law of the blood) rather than through soil or country (*ius solis*). But it was not until the citizenship law of 1913 (*Staatsangehörigkeit*) that the implications for *das Auslandsdeutschtum* (blood-Germans living abroad) became clear and would have begun, perhaps, to irritate the Russian government. Based on the principle of the *ius sanguinis*, the 1913 law aimed at excluding Poles from German citizenship while extending German citizenship to anyone of German blood descent living abroad who had become a citizen of another country. See especially John Breuilly, "German National Identity," in: Eva Kolinsky & Wilfried van der Will, eds., *The German Companion to Modern German Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 44-66, especially 52-55. If this is in fact the law that Durnovo and the Russian government were referring to, it would seem quite arbitrary and unjust to take a law essentially passed in 1913 and make it the central proof for the disloyalty of German colonists living in Russia, especially those who had arrived there over a century earlier. No doubt, neither Mennonites nor German colonists even knew anything about the law.

20. Both Durnovo and a number of Duma representatives cast doubt on the "German threat" from within, though Durnovo did argue that the "continued flow of German colonists to Russia" had to stop. Indeed, he stated: ". . . who has not seen genuine Russians, orthodox, loyal with all their hearts, dedicated to the principles of the Russian state, and yet only one or two generations removed from their German emigrant ancestry?" Golder, *Documents*: 17. Did he believe it possible for German Protestants or Catholics to become true Russians? It would appear so. In the Duma, the conservative N. E. Markov, on 23 May, 1914, argued that the Russians could expect nothing from France and England and were alienating Germany. Golder, *Documents*: 26. It is difficult to say how widespread such sentiments were, but both Bernard Pares and the British ambassador, Sir George Nicholson, refer repeatedly to a fairly strong pro-German sentiment at court throughout the war. If even Nicholas II was – at least to 1905 – favorably disposed to Germany, as were both Witte and Durnovo, then the arguments presented in

- the preamble to the 9 October proposed liquidation law were opportunistic in the extreme, coming from the worst elements within the government and catering to the worst elements outside of it.
21. David H. Epp, "Die Deutschen in Russland," *Bt*, IX, #84 (21 October, 1914): 3.
  22. H. J. Braun, "Das Schulwesen," *H. J. Braun Nachlass*.
  23. This is made explicit in the minutes [4 March, 1917] of an early meeting of the Provisional Government where a proposal was introduced to issue a *ukase* to "discontinue the liquidation of the German landholdings." See Robert Paul Browder & Alexander F. Kerensky, eds., *The Russian Provisional Government 1917* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961): 162. See also Paul P. Gronsky, *The War Government* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1973): 27. Indeed, Gronsky asserts: "The first year of the War brought no serious changes into the organization of the Russian central government institutions. However, as a result of the War and its 'extraordinary circumstances,' legislation under Article 87 of the Fundamental Laws was intensified, so as to evade the normal legislative method. The legislative bills were examined only by the Council of Ministers and if the Council approved them they were submitted for confirmation to the Emperor," p. 26.
  24. Basil Dmytryshyn, ed., *Imperial Russia, a Source Book, 1700-1917* (Fort Worth, etc.: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1990): 421.
  25. See Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire*, pp. 61 - 69 on the Russian government's change of policy during the early months of the war.
  26. Long, *Privileged to Dispossessed*: 230-235; and Koch, *Volga Germans*: 242-247.
  27. It would be interesting to compare the percentages of those who refused military service as given above with the percentages of the entire group of German speaking colonists that Mennonites constituted for the years in question.
  28. Eric Lohr argues that the easing of the censorship laws in the October, 1905 Manifesto led to a "burst of nationalist activity, publication, and organization among the empire's various nationalities" (p. 5), but it was the declaration of war that led to an attack on the German Embassy and stores with German names as early as 22 July (p. 13). See especially pp. 13 - 30.
  29. The essential difference between the first and second editions with regard to this "Dutch" argument had to do with the Mennonite use of the Dutch language. It is in this respect that the second edition extends the argument considerably. All Braun said about this problem in the first edition was: "The following can be said about the language of the Mennonites who migrated to Poland: without a doubt, all those Mennonites knew Dutch, using it as the language of their worship services. To determine the language they actually used in daily discourse, however, is far more difficult, for in 17<sup>th</sup> century Holland (as today), aside from the Dutch dialects that derive from the lower Franconian language, there were Low German dialects in widespread use as well - as for example *Plattdeutsch* in the Gronnigen region. These dialects are closely related to one another, the more so the further back in time one goes, which makes it difficult to demarcate them geographically with any precision. Furthermore, we do not know the exact areas in the Netherlands from which the Mennonites migrated to Poland. In any case, it can be assumed that many of them were familiar with a form of Low German. "The inhabitants encountered by the Mennonites upon their arrival in the Marienwerder lowlands also spoke a Low German dialect. Because of this it was fully comprehensible to the Mennonites and it consequently quickly became the vernacular of the Mennonites themselves . . . ."
  30. At least that is what the brochure states on page 2, SAofCr, Fond 27, Inventory File # 13, Sheet 44. In time of war the military took over censorship in Russia. From

time to time the Council of Ministers complained that this meant that the press became unbridled in its criticism of the government because the military made no provisions for "political censorship." Thus, at a meeting of the ministerial council in 29 August, 1915 Krivoshein, Minister of Agriculture, remarked: "... Have not we a censorship, war censors, generals, lieutenants, and finally a special officer at the head of the press? What are they doing? ..." And at a meeting of 10 September, 1915, Polivanov remarked: "... The war censorship, like other institutions of the Russian Empire, is bound by law and in the law of military censorship no provision was made *for political censorship* ... [my emphasis]." See Golder, *Documents*: 182 & 183. It is therefore likely that Peter Braun's *Kto takie Mennonity* slipped through the military censorship precisely because it was a political document. It would probably not have been approved by the Department of Internal Affairs that normally controlled censorship.

31. Had Mennonites finally read the parable of the shrewd steward and begun to attempt to reach out to the masses as well as to the Russian authorities? If so, it was just a little late in the day.
32. *Ibid*: The concern of the St. Petersburg Military Censorship Commission may, in this instance, reflect pressure placed upon it by the St. Petersburg government itself, a pressure not present in Odessa.
33. *Ibid*: Sheets 50 & 52.
34. Pre-publication censorship ended with the implementation of the Temporary Press Laws issued by Witte on 24 November, 1905 for anything over ten sheets *in octavo*. See Balmuth, *Censorship*: 132.
35. The literature on Russian censorship of the press, especially military censorship during wartime, appears relatively limited. Odessa was a center of German colonist activity, as indicated by the publication of the *Oddessaer Zeitung* in that city. Could this factor perhaps have influenced the military censors there? Did Mennonites, perhaps, send a "little" bribe along? For Russian censorship generally, see: Marianna Tax-Choldin, *A Fence around the Empire: Russian Censorship of Western Ideas under the Tsars* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985); and Charles A. Rund, "Russia," in Robert Justin Goldstein, ed., *The War for the Public Mind: Political Censorship in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Westport, CO: Praeger, 2000): 239-272.
36. In an anonymous, rather lengthy article taken from *Vorwärts* and reprinted in the *MR* (7 July, 1920): 11-13; (14 July, 1920): 5-6; (21 July, 1920): 7-8, the following statement is made: "The pivotal point of the laws referred to was the political German descent. That is why the German-Swiss colonists of the Lutheran faith tried to halt the application of these laws to their lands by claiming to be of Swiss descent; Mennonites, following their example, attempted to do the same, since they were recognized to be of Dutch descent . . ." (7 July, 1920): 13. Though the article is anonymous, there are good reasons to assume that someone close to the events wrote the piece. But I have found no other statement that argues that Mennonites followed the Swiss example, although Lindemann indicates that Swedes and others sought to use similar arguments in their own behalf. Indeed, the fact that *Kto takie Mennonity* was written by 9 September, 1914, well before the land liquidation legislation became law, would appear to negate the above assertion for the argument was in general use before the liquidation law was even introduced in the Duma.
37. Braun probably took this information from Felicia Szper's 1913 book on Dutch colonization in Poland.
38. See also Ipatov, *Mennoniten*: 42. Peter Braun appears to have been oblivious to

- the fact that Russians were not particularly enamored with the Poles, especially after the uprising of 1863, and that this argument might arouse antipathy toward them.
39. Ipatov, *Mennoniten*: 44-45, makes the interesting assertion that the language change of the Prussian Mennonites coincided with the partitions of Poland and the annexation of the lands in which they lived by Prussia. This was no coincidence. He observed: "The substitution of the German for the Dutch language, which the Mennonites had long resisted (even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century), was brought about by a number of causes. One of the latter was the gradual though increasing infrequency of cultural (primarily confessional) contacts with and relationships to Holland. The primary reason, however, was the policy of assimilation carried out by the Prussian government in East Prussia. Under the pressure of this policy the Mennonites in Königsburg published, in 1776, the first small volume of songs in the German language which still contained texts translated from the Dutch, and in 1768 appeared the Mennonite catechism entitled, 'Confession or Short and Simple Report of the Faith of the old Flemish Congregations in Prussia, 1768.' The same fate also overcame the Mennonites of the Danzig coastal region after the Second Partition of Poland. In spite of the fact that the Tsarist government had ordered the Mennonites in Russia to submit official documents and correspondence with the government in the High German language, and to use this language in their public discourse, it nevertheless only remained a ceremonial language [Kultussprache]."
  40. According to Karl Lindemann, these colonies, too – during the land liquidation crisis – sought to convince tsarist authorities that they were not German and that the law ought therefore not to apply to them.
  41. As we noted in note #6 above, this was later proven to have been an erroneous assumption on the part of the Russian Mennonites.
  42. This vaunted Mennonite loyalty to "Tsar and Fatherland" was questioned by a number of local Molotschna Ukrainians about the time Braun wrote these very words. On 8 September 1914, teacher Kudin of the *Zentralschule* and teacher Astrov of the *Komerzschule* organized a patriotic observance in the town of Halbstadt to which from 100 to 150 people came . . . most of them "Russian and Orthodox." The absence of "German" Mennonites was so notable that someone sent a report in to Bishop Dimitrij of Taurida and Simferopol on the matter. On 4 October the bishop notified the governor of Taurida of the letter, saying in passing that the writer, who had lived in the midst of the "Germans" for 14 years, had stated that "if Germans were ever to enter Halbstadt (from which, oh Lord, deliver us!), local Germans would meet them with open arms and with bread and salt" – precisely what happened in Halbstadt in April of 1918. In his own part of the letter, Bishop Dimitrij observed that though these "Germans" had been invited into Russia to "plant agriculture," they had thanked their new fatherland by planting "Stundism and God-hated Baptism" instead. Thereupon he attacked the Raduga Press as having been established for the express purpose of spreading Baptist ideas amongst the Russians. It published hundreds of thousands of Baptist brochures and calendars in the Russian language, he asserted, when few amongst them even knew the language. These brochures they distributed free of charge among the Russian people. Why is it, he asked, that the Germans were doing this? "Of course," he replied, "only to enlighten the Russian people and trap them into the sect." Raduga, therefore, was not a commercial enterprise but a "solemnly propagandistic organization." He requested that the governor shut the press down at least for the duration of the war. But the bishop had not reckoned with H. J.

Braun. Writing to the governor, Braun declared the accusations against Raduga to be incorrect on a number of counts. First, he asserted, Raduga never published any "confessional or denominational" literature; no publications were "of Baptist content" but everything was of a "general Christian and moral content," another indication that an "Allianz" commitment was a strategic one to avoid the snare of the Russian "proselytism" hunter as much as possible. He then referred back to the March 1910 Raduga investigation and asserted that "nothing to their offense" had been found. Indeed, everything they published, he continued, "was approved by the censorship and none of our publications have ever been confiscated or fined." Braun then proceeded to describe what Raduga did, again asserting that everything was legally done and approved by the censors. Furthermore, closing the press would jeopardize the jobs of some fifty workers who earned their income there. After describing the nature of the *Friedensstimme*, Braun presented the governor with the following examples of Raduga's publications, clearly implying thereby that the government was infringing Mennonite rights of religious freedom granted them so long ago in the law: 1) "Die Stellung der Mennoniten zur Frage von der Glaubensfreiheit und der Propaganda"; 2) the brochure *Kto takie Mennonitey?* (Braun would surely not have included this document had it not really passed the Military Censorship Commission); 3) a number of "religious" articles from the pages of the *Friedensstimme*; 4) a copy of the (1910?) decision of the Governor General; and 5) a copy of their petition (what petition it was is not stated). Braun concluded by objecting to the government's designation of the Mennonites as a "sect" and declared, giving specific references, that Mennonites were a legal "confession" and deserved to be treated as such without having their religious freedoms curtailed. SAofCr, Fund No. 26, Inventory No. 3, File No. 911, Sheets # 1, 2, etc.

43. Document No. 4, Reel No. 16, Fond No. 821, Opis No. 133, Dielo No. 319, Request No. 37, CSHAofR.
44. Document No. 3: *Op. cit.*
45. K. Lindemann, *Liquidation of Land Ownership*: Appendix I.
46. *Ibid.*
47. Document No. 7: *Ibid.* Mennonites do not appear to have realized that it was their rejection of military service that had made them a target for the liquidation of their land in the first round of the law. If they had not so adamantly defended their exemption from military service they might perhaps have had more success with their "Dutch" argument early on.
48. SAofCr, Fond 27, Inventory 24, File 38, Sheet 5.
49. *Ibid.*: Sheet 4. The response from Gnadenfeld is the more interesting one, for it was in this settlement that the Prussian "Pietistic Lutheran" group, which had joined the Mennonites in their 1835 migration from Prussia lived. These were certainly not of Dutch extraction.
50. *Ibid.*: Sheet 6. This ruling may have been based on the government's assumption that German subjects in Russia had retained their German citizenship and therefore, at best, had a divided loyalty, at worst, belonged to a German fifth column. It is therefore possible that the German law referred to in this regard in the preamble to the first land liquidation law had practical consequences for the Russian Mennonites.
51. *Ibid.*: Sheet 39.
52. *Ibid.*: Sheet 8.
53. SAofCr, Fund No. 27, Inventory No. 1: File No. 13015.
54. *Ibid.*: Sheet 109.

55. *Ibid*: Sheet 176.
56. SAofCr, Fond No. 27, Opis No. 24, Dielo No. 379. Document No. 2.
57. *Ibid*.
58. *Ibid*: Document No. 63.
59. David Johann Klassen, President of the Forestry Oversight Committee, former highly decorated Halbstadt Central School teacher, however, had his lands exempted by special decree of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 19 March, 1916. Document No. 82.
60. Around this time, on 23 May, 1915, a certain A. Rennikov, writing in *Novoe Vremia* summarized the contents of Peter Braun's pamphlet under the following statements: "Mennonites settled in Russia after a direct invitation from the Russian government. Apart from a few exceptions, the ancestral motherland of Mennonites is not Germany, but Holland. Ancestors of Russian Mennonites, after leaving Holland were Polish citizens for 232 - 253 years. Many of them have never been Prussian citizens, especially those who came in 1788 from Danzig and in 1835 from the Kingdom of Poland. The rest were Prussian citizens for only 16 to 31 years, against their will and because of the partition of Poland. Therefore it would be wrong to call Mennonites descendants of German citizens, because they came as Polish citizens, and that is without considering their Dutch heritage and their 125 years in Russia already."

Having summarized the content of the Mennonite argument, Rennikov continued:

"These statements Mennonites consider axioms, but for us, they hold no evidence. It is true that Mennonites lived in Russia for 125 years. So, what are the results of this living? What did Russia get from them for her hospitality? Numerous occasions of mocking the Russian army, insulting the Emperor and praise for Wilhelm, and many other slanderous things I have recorded from Ekaterinoslav gubernia. Can the weapons recently found in Chortitza convince us of Mennonite honesty? Or did the seventy Mennonites pronounced guilty and banished from Ekaterinoslav gubernia east to Tomsk mean to live peacefully in the state of Russia? Even if Mennonites were descendants not just of the Dutch, but also of Mexicans and Guineans: this [ancestry] is not relevant. It is also irrelevant how many years they lived against their will as Polish or Prussian citizens. The danger lies in the spirit of the Mennonites, their attitudes, self-isolation, disdain toward the Russian people, exploitation of Russian peasantry, tendency to support Germanism, and everything that goes against Russian national interests. It can even be said that their citizenship in Russia is against their will, more so than the forced citizenship they experienced after the partition of Poland, when they shared the language, customs and similar rationalistic faith with their new Prussian friends. Even for a patient Russian character it would be an appalling act if these Mennonite arguments would find support first in Simferopol, and then, in Petrograd. And in Petrograd, Mennonites are pushing all the channels they can, and using all strategies they can to gain acceptance. As far as the Taurida gubernia administration is concerned, it is mired in a mood of indolence and indeterminateness. When I went into the administration and asked one of the officials about the progress on liquidation, he casually poured some sugar in his steamed milk, and answered with the following:

"Our work is in progress, as you know; an enormous task. We are now busy renaming the colonies, and we must find new names not just out of nowhere, but [we must] preserve both the grammatical and historical meanings of the place names. For example, Friedensruh will become Miropokoyisk [i.e. The Peaceful Rest], Konteniusfeld, Pole Kolonizatora Konteniusfelda [The Field of Colonizator

Kontenius] . . . In our work we have certain doubts about the colony of Hier-schau. If we rename it, should we rename it as a Hirsch Au or Oleniy Lug [Deer Meadow], or rename it as Hier Schau or Smotri Syuda! [Look Here!]? I believe we must be very careful and ask Petrograd's opinion about it. Yes, as you see, we are drowning in work!"

"I then realized that it would be useless for me to remain in Simferopol any longer. So, that very evening, I bought myself a ticket back to Petrograd."

Was there really a difference in approach to the land liquidation matter between the Taurida governor's office and St. Petersburg? It would appear to be so.

61. Ipatov, *Mennoniten*: 43, argues: ". . . In this manner G. G. Pisarevski justified the Germanization of the Mennonites in 1917. But in an earlier work which was not permeated by the chauvinistic spirit of WWI, the same Pisarevski produced evidence that indicated Mennonites were of Dutch descent . . ."
  62. K. Lindemann, *Liquidation of Land Ownership*: Appendix I. If Lindemann got the letter to Bergmann sometime in August or September, the pamphlet can only have been published late in 1915.
  63. The point of this last caption was probably that Mennonites had not demanded any privileges, but had been granted them freely by the Russian government at the time.
  64. It may well have been in conjunction with his attempt to prove this contention that Epp embarked upon the writing of a major document entitled: "Bausteine zur Geschichte der Mennoniten in S. Russland." Never published, the document – some 175 manuscript pages in length – bears the date of "4 September, 1916, Bardsiansk" on the opening page. That is the date it was probably completed. This could well indicate that Epp's manuscript was begun around the time of his and H. A. Bergmann's 1915 *The Question of Mennonite Origins*, for it deals with the second of the major issues treated in the latter piece: that Prussia's takeover of the Polish regions in the partitions following the Seven Years' War was a disaster for the Prussian Mennonites and forced them to accept Catherine the Great's invitation to migrate to Russia. The manuscript indeed opens with this very argument and then proceeds to the "Dutch origins" argument of the Russian Mennonites. The two basic arguments Epp had only been able to touch on in his hastily produced 1915 Petrograd document are here developed at much greater length. The document is held by the MLA, North Newton, KS.
- In a letter to James Urry of 2 August, 1990 David Rempel confirmed the above interpretation. There he wrote: "Part I, sub. 1, is entitled *Bausteine* (Building-blocks). It is a review, entirely from secondary sources, . . . Mannhardt's well known work on the Danziger Mennoniten, and one or two other German works on how *Mennonites from the Low Countries* got to Danzig and environs, how the three Partitions of Poland took place and how Mennonites fared prior to and after these events. Nothing particularly new, *but does give a picture of Prussian machinations against Danzig*. This, by the way, scarcely receives decent portrayal in any Mennonite story of those years. *Nor does one ever find a portrayal of why the early emigrants to Russia had very little favorable to remember of their Prussian days* [my emphasis]. There are diaries from those years which indicate the strong dislike among those emigrants against everything 'Prussian.'" This latter document, as the manuscript, was provided to me by John Thiesen, MLA archivist.
65. Bergmann & Epp, *The Question of Mennonite Origins*: 1-6.
  66. *Ibid*: 8.

67. *Ibid*: 15.
68. *Ibid*: 22.
69. D. Rempel, "Expropriation," pp. 58-59.
70. Perhaps the arresting agency read the 3 June, 1915 article in *Novoe Vremia* entitled: "The Basis of Pan-Germanism" which observed that the Molotschna preachers were especially active in attempting to prove their "Dutch origin" while at the same time defending their German school systems. The writer then singled out H. J. Braun as the most active of these preachers who not only vigorously defended the Mennonite use of the German language, but also their "Baptist proselytism." Indeed, he called Braun a seducer of the Russian children who studied in the Halbstadt schools. (If this can be believed, little had changed in Halbstadt since the Raduga investigation.) Document No. 16, Reel No. 16, Fond No. 821, Opis No. 133, Dielo No. 319, Request No. 37, CSHAofR. On 15 May, 1915 John P. Dyck wrote: "Halbstadt, Jakob Braun was arrested. Likely Heinrich Braun, his brother, was who was meant, but he has disappeared. Heinrich Braun was a minister with the Mennonite Brethren, and a renowned evangelist. [David G. Rempel, *A Mennonite Family in Tsarist Russia*: 166, agrees, calling him a "well-known evangelist."] Perhaps Russians were being converted through his ministry. This would make him a criminal in the minds of the Orthodox Church and the authorities."
71. H. J. Braun, "Das Schulwesen," *H. J. Braun Nachlass*. In a letter to the Treasurer of the American Baptist Missionary Union of Boston on 15 April, 1916, Braun wrote: "Rev. Lehmann is some month not at home; I too [am not at home] – we are Revs. – but please send your letter to my wife on that address: Mrs. Helene Braun, Post Molotschansk, Jekater., Street 33, Taurida, South Russia, and I will get it and all will be good." In the archives of the *American Baptist Historical Society*, Valley Forge, PA: Box 154, Group 618, Russian Mennonite Brethren 1900-1919, ABFMS Correspondence Files.
72. An anonymous document in the *B. B. Janz Papers*. See the relevant part of the document in note # 48.
73. A Ukrainian scholar who has seen these petitions – in a recent discussion with Paul Toews, Director of the Center for MB Studies in Fresno – stated that there were some 6,500 of them. Now, the example of such a petition, given below, clearly stems from after December, 1915 because it refers to both the first and second liquidation law. It is therefore possible that there were two sets of petitions sent in: the first in July and August, 1915, a direct outcome of the above meeting; and a second toward the end of March, 1916. Lindemann, who did his archival work for Epp and Bergmann in July and August of 1915 can only have seen the first batch. And these may well have numbered 5,200. The other 1,300 – as the one given – must have been sent in later, together constituting the 6,500 seen by Toews' Ukrainian scholar. Perhaps they were sent in around the end of March, 1916, for on 28 March, 1916 Peter J. Dyck made the following entry into his diary: "Today at the Schulzenbott, a sample petition was read. Each individual is to hand in his own petition to His Majesty, the Emperor, in regard to the land requisition of their homes. In this we are to state that we are actually not German, but Dutch, and that the Boers in Africa are our *Rodneji Bratja* (true brothers). It also seems problematical to have each Mennonite present his own petition. We really seem to lack faith in God, as Pastor Kuegelgen is to have said in Petrograd. The other Germans, who also wish to remain German, are not working nearly as hard as the Mennonites. *Nor are they spending as much money*. Nothing more will happen to them than will happen to us Mennonites [my emphasis]." *Troubles and Triumphs*: 22.



74. K. Lindemann, *Liquidation of Land Ownership*: Appendix I, note 4. The St. Petersburg archives – in a preliminary search – were found to contain a list of some 17 such petitions (no specific dates are given) from a Heinrich Kliever, an Anna Walde, a Johann Kliever, a Sarah Born, a Margarita Wiens, a Heinrich Kettler, a Daniel Janzen, a Peter Dyck, a David Kliever, a David Neufeld, a Heinrich Sudermann, an Anna Harder, an Isaak Harms, a Johann Berg, an Abraham Schoenke, a Helene Berg, and an Agatha Klassen. The list was sent by the Vice-Director, A Putilov, to Duke Volkonsky, the Minister of Internal Affairs and current protector of H. J. Braun in St Petersburg, and was described as an “Inventory listing of the petitions of the descendants of German colonists for their exemption from the application of their lands of the liquidation laws of 2 February and 13 December, 1915.” Because of the importance of these petitions, one such – that of Johann Peter Kliever – is given here. The petitions are virtually identical except for personal details and differences in size and location of landholdings. The petitions clearly point to a central, prepared document which was then modified by the individual petitioner to reflect his/her particular situation. The document reads:

“To His Imperial Majesty, August Monarch and All-Merciful Ruler:

From the loyal settled landowner Johann Peter Kliever of the village of Pshenichnoye, Bogdanovka [Gnadenfeld] volost, Berdyansk uyezd (district), Tavrichesk (Tavria) gubernia:

#### PETITION

More than 80 years ago, my grandfather settled in Russia along with a number of other Mennonites under an invitation of the Russian government, settling in Molotschna District, which now consists of Molochansk and Bogdanovka volosts, Berdyansk uyezd.

Here, finally after a long wandering and suffering in Western Europe, Mennonites found a homeland, which adopted them like its own children. As a result, the desert-like areas of Molotschna were quickly turned into a place rich with fruit orchards, fields, and herds. Living with all these blessings, Mennonites never forgot that they owe all of it to the kindness of the Russian Rulers; they therefore educated their children in a spirit of deep reverence towards the Monarchs and unbounded love to them and to Russia. As a sign of this, Mennonites decided voluntarily to institute the Russian language as the language of instruction in all their schools long before the government issued a decree telling all foreign colonists to do so. Now Mennonites are native citizens of Great Russia, ready to sacrifice everything for their beloved Tsar and Fatherland. How wrong are those who consider Mennonites to be the so-called ‘colonists from Prussia’! They ignore the truth that our *ancestors came from the Netherlands, contemporary Holland and Belgium, and belong to the Dutch nationality*. From there, they settled in Poland, and only after the partition of Poland, some Mennonites, against their will, from 1816 to 1831, were forced to accept Prussian citizenship. From this they were, very fortunately, delivered by the migration to Russia, the result of the Mercy of Your Imperial Majesty’s Great Grandmother, Catherine II. Many of us, who settled in Russia in 1788, came from the Polish city of Gdansk, and never were Prussian citizens. This origin of the Mennonites is proven by the acts and documents stored in the archives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Petrograd and Moscow (File XVI: File of Gdansk 1786-1781. Colonist Files 1786-1792). *Therefore, neither we nor any of the other Mennonites have German blood, and*

*the spirit of German hatefulness and militarism is foreign to us.* In the same way, the native language of the Mennonites has always been Low-Dutch, and not German. Mennonites had to start speaking German only because the Russian government issued a decree on July 30, 1797, where, in order to establish a common language of communication, German was chosen to be used in all correspondence between the government and the colonists (P. Kamensky, *On the Issue of the Foreign Settlements in South Russia*. Moscow 1895, page 65). Now all Mennonites, including myself and my family, know and speak Russian, for it is the language of our Fatherland.

United into one family with its mother Russia, Mennonites have shared with her all her joys and sorrows. In all wars, they have come to help their Motherland, with all they have: money, work and produce. The Great Grandfather of Your Imperial Majesty Nikolai I honored the Mennonites of Tavria for their loyalty and heroic deeds for the Crown and the Fatherland during the Crimean War. This document was issued to the Mennonites 31 December, 1854. The Mennonites also came to help during the Turkish and Japanese wars. During the times of hardships, bad harvests, and so on, Mennonites were fully ready to help their fellow-countrymen. The present war aroused a patriotism that swept through the country and Mennonites joined with all true sons of Great Rus' to protect the Tsar and the Fatherland. The encroachment of the arrogant Germans on the honor and dignity of Russia is also an encroachment on the Mennonite spirituality, and thus on the Mennonite youth who, aside from those conscripted, voluntarily hurried off to help the dear Motherland as medical unit workers, sacrificing themselves to the task of serving their neighbor in the war fields as well as in the hospitals. During this war the Molotschna Mennonites sacrificed 240,000 rubles in monetary support alone; this excludes aid in the form of produce and the maintenance of three military hospitals.

"My relations, and the relations of other Mennonites with the local authorities have always been friendly and honest, and I have always obeyed them without objection. Not even once during the time of the latest hardships have I sullied my record of the obedient fulfillment of my duties, nor have I ever in my entire life damaged my integrity and good-will. Like other Mennonites of Tavria, I have the best relations with neighboring Russian villages; to help those families whose men were called up to the front, we sent out several thousand carts with threshers.

"At the present, Mennonites are going through times of great grief. Because we have been equated with the Germans, we became subject to the laws of 2 February and 13 December, 1915, on the liquidation of land. Our sorrow is therefore great because our Motherland has turned her back on us, and we stand on the verge of destruction since, having been farmers all of our lives, agriculture is our only living.

"We the Mennonites of Molochansk and Bogdanovka as a people owe [everything to] Your Mercies and the Mercies of Your Crown-Wearing Ancestors, Our Great Ruler; in this time of sorrow and tribulation I would once more like to appeal for Mercy to my Beloved Monarch.

"I beg Your Imperial Majesty to trust in the sincerity of my passionate love and unconditional loyalty to Your Saintly Persons and to the Motherland.

"Do not punish me, Your subject, but have mercy on me, and in the loving ways of Your Monarchical Grace free me from the application of the liquidation on my estate, so that I can keep the right to own the land I possess in the village of Pshenichnoye, Bogdanovka volost, Berdyansk uyezd, Tavrichesk gubernia.

"My land consists of 76 desyatin and 667 sazhen." Reel No. 29 of the CMBS-Fresno Collection from the St. Petersburg Archives.

The repeated references to Molotschna and Gnadenfeld would make it appear that the document was generated in Halbstadt by Henrich and Peter Braun. Indeed, the structure of the argument is remarkably similar to the larger structure of Peter Braun's *Kto takie Mennonity?* This cannot have been one of the 5,200 petitions referred to by Karl Lindemann, for it clearly refers to the second law of 13 December, 1915, introduced well after Lindemann's foray into the archives in August of 1915. It must therefore have been written in 1916. What is also important to note is the emphasis on the Dutch origin of the Russian Mennonites, their adamant rejection of German (Prussian) militarism, and their argument that no "Mennonites have German blood."

75. K. Lindemann, *Von den deutschen Kolonisten*: 117.
  76. Document No. 8, Reel No. 16, Fond No. 821, Opis No. 133, Dielo No. 319, Request No. 37, CSHAofR.
  77. Document No. 11: *Ibid.*
  78. K. Lindemann, *Von den deutschen Kolonisten*: 117.
  79. CSHAofR, Fond No. 1292, Opis No. 5, Delo No. 340, Request No. 39.
  80. *Ibid.*
  81. *Ibid*: 31-32. Lindemann stated he had been given copies of these two letters by a friend on the council.
  82. Had he been bribed? See the discussion below with regard to the land liquidation laws.
  83. H. J. Braun, "Das Schulwesen," *H. J. Braun Nachlass*. On 8 August, 1916, Nikolai Mikhailovich, a large estate owner, wrote to Nicholas II: "In accordance with my promise, I am writing about my impressions here. My estate represents an immense area of 75,000 desiatins. It is situated in three uiezds of three guberniias: Kherson and Ekaterinoslav, uiezds of the same names, and Taurida guberniia, uiezd of Melitopol. There are sixteen villages on the estate, and seven German colonies, one of which moved away last year on its own initiative. The remaining colonies are waiting for the decision of the Government; most of them are Mennonites, who are inclined to stay, and one, of Wurtembergers, intends to move. Thus far there have been no misunderstandings with them.
- "The Mennonites emphasize the fact that they left Germany two hundred years ago, spent a long time in Poland, migrated to us under Emperor Alexander II, and have been dwelling here over fifty years. Although they do not believe in war, they furnished soldiers who serve as hospital orderlies. In conversation, they stress their anti-German attitude, even though everywhere in their homes there are portraits of the Kaiser, and also old Vasili Fedorovich [Kaiser Wilhelm I], as well as of Bismarck and Moltke. Personally, I hope that they will clear out bag and baggage after the war." Golder, *Documents*: 179-180.
84. In his "The Background and Causes of the Flight of the Mennonites from Russia in 1919," *MQR*, vol. IV (October, 1930), #4: 268, Benjamin Unruh wrote: "The economic decline [of the Mennonite colonists] began with the outbreak of war and has continued into decay and ruin. The large estates in the colonies were hit first by the confiscation law of the year 1915. At that time the owners were deported and Russian managers placed on the estates, who for the most part understood little or nothing of agriculture, who squandered the invested capital, and under whose managership the livestock on the estates rapidly decreased as the result of unwise measures, and whose management of the land was so bad that the production of grain suffered exceedingly. The former owners moved as poor people into

- the villages, where they struggled for their existence in the most difficult work. In Russia for such persons there was naturally no possibility of further existence . . . .” That H. J. Braun’s estates were among those confiscated at the time would appear all but certain. On 21 October, 1916 Peter J. Dyck wrote in his diary: “The matter of land requisition is becoming serious. We are entering difficult times.”
85. *Ibid.*
  86. K. Lindemann, *Von den deutschen Kolonisten*: 39.
  87. J. H. Janzen, *Lifting the Veil*: 82. David G. Rempel, *A Mennonite Family*: 161, also argues that Mennonite delegates took bribes to the authorities in August, 1916. And in a footnote (p. 322, note 4) he writes: “Various Mennonites took bribes to Petrograd. The diary of Peter J. Dyck states: ‘Once again . . . David Dyck, Jacob Neufeld . . . and Heinrich Fast went to Petrograd to work with the requisition of land. It is said that 50,000 rubles have been put at their disposal . . .’ It also mentions that two Schoenwiese men, Jakob Niebuhr and Kornelius Hiebert, lobbied effectively with Rodzianko, the President of the State Duma, who they hoped would influence the Minister of Justice, Dobrovol’skii, and that the two telegraphed that ‘the operation has been successful.’ They requested 100,000 rubles, 10,000 was to go to Dobrovol’ski immediately. They were to deliver the final portion of what amounted to a bribe once his favorable decision was approved. The source of the money is not clear. The *Niebuhr Chronik* mentions the incident as well.”
  88. “Brother Braun was provided with money from the, at the time, still wealthy Mennonite volost governments . . . .”
  89. J. H. Janzen, *Lifting the Veil*: 98. For the story of the dispossession of the Volhynian Germans, see Koch, *The Volga Germans*: 242-247. Peter Braun confirms – in a general sense – that bribery of officials took place, when he wrote in his 1922 “Some Thoughts on Emigration”: “And we practical Mennonites have exemplified in this respect an amazing adaptability; we knew how, even under crooked circumstances, to get what we deemed ours. We take it as axiomatic that the Russian is generally untrustworthy in his dealings and unfaithful in his service, that he wants to be bribed; even as an official he is driven by selfish and ignoble motives. We despise him for this but use him nevertheless: we bring gifts, bribe and pay with the best of them. We have come so far along this road that we seldom see anything wrong with this kind of ‘gift.’ It is deemed something that is inevitable and merely a means either to get what we have coming to us or to avoid the consequences of some unjust, capricious, often even lawful measure. We often enough achieve our goal . . . .”
  90. Janzen, *Lifting the Veil*: 82.
  91. B. B. Janz, in a petition to the Dutch government of 22 December, 1921 requesting that the Russian Mennonites be repatriated to the Netherlands, appears to indicate that it was in fact the late January, 1917 submission to the Tsar that did the trick. In that letter Janz wrote: “Only on 29 January, 1917 were we able, through the mediation of a minister, to have a petition brought directly to the highest authority [the Tsar] to prevent the liquidation of the lands of our mother colonies, Molotschna and Chortitza, when the Tsar wrote on the petition in his own hand: ‘The liquidation of Mennonite land is to be halted until their claim to be of Dutch descent can be investigated.’ This command was immediately cabled to all local authorities. In spite of this the liquidation of land never stopped completely, not even during the period of the provisional government.” MLA: MS-60, #49. H. H. Schroeder, *Russlanddeutsche Friesen*, p. 3, would appear to confirm Janz’s statement when he writes: “During World War I when the peasants and

individual landowners of German descent were to have their land liquidated in accordance with the law of 2. 2. 1915 and be resettled in Siberia, a number of members of the Mennonite Church, on their own initiative, declared to the tsarist government that Mennonites were of Dutch ancestry; by that means they achieved the suspension of the land liquidation laws for the members of their congregations." In a footnote Schroeder refers directly to the 1917 Braun/Thiessen submission. See also the similar observation in the anonymous *Rundschau* article of 1920.

92. *Ibid*: 98 note 5. Unruh, *Die Auswanderung*, p. 93, observes: "... On the very eve of the 1917 February revolution a command was sent to the governors to drive the South Russian German farmers from their villages and to implement the land liquidation laws with all severity.

"Nor was there a dearth of direct provocations, of dark machinations, to provide a rationale for doing so."

There is no word here of B. B. Janz's later statement that the Tsar had suspended the law against the Mennonites pending an investigation of the validity of their "Dutch" argument. See his letter of 23 December, 1921 to the Queen of Holland quoted above.

93. Others say, probably more correctly, in December, 1916.
94. On Thiessen, see *ML*, IV: 316. Thiessen had been a missionary to Java under the auspices of the Dutch Mennonite missionary society, but appears to have been dismissed from his post for some reason. He apparently held Dutch citizenship and happened to be residing in St. Petersburg at the time, but was a native Russian Mennonite.
95. B. H. Unruh, "Praktische Fragen," *Bote*, 17 November, (1937): 3.
96. This may have been the same person Count Witte wrote of in his memoirs when he stated:
- "With respect to inviolability of person, one of the worst infringements of this right was the practice of perlustration [intercepting and opening mail]. It had been going on long before 17 October, but not on the scale of the Stolypin era.
- "When I became premier, an official, whose name, I believe, was Timofeev, asked, on behalf of Durnovo, the minister of the interior, if I had any instructions about being given perlustrated letters. I gave no instructions, nor did I discuss the matter with Durnovo, but every day I received a packet of such letters from the minister, who, naturally, had selected what he wanted me to read. I used to skim through them, but not once did I see a letter which provided anything useful to the government or the police." Witte, *Memoirs*: 679.
97. *B. B. Janz Papers*. It is interesting to note that Unruh nowhere mentions that it was this "notorious" submission, or any other, that brought "success" to the Mennonite cause.
98. H. H. Schroeder, *Russlanddeutsche Friesen* (Doellstadt-Langensalza: Selbstverlag, 1936): 3, note #1. We will deal with Felicia Spzer's dissertation in the next chapter. Lindemann, page 40, mentions the dissertation but does not bring it into any connection with the memorandum or petition.
99. *Canadian Board of Colonization Papers*, vol. 1165, folder 15. Here we discover who this "Thiessen" is.
100. In April, 1920 K. Lindemann was in Halbstadt and while there stayed at the home of his friend, H. J. Braun. Benjamin Unruh's wife, Frieda, recorded in her diary for April 26-28: "For some time now Professor Lindemann has been here in Halbstadt at the Heinrich Brauns: he had therefore also to be invited. It was a genial company. Lindemann had just arrived from Gnadenfeld and Ohrloff; he had also

been in Steinbach for a period of time. He visited a number of schools in the region and intends, tomorrow, to present a talk on the history of the land liquidation . . .

"28 April. Yesterday the teachers, together with Prof. Lindemann, were invited to the Peter Brauns. I was present and heard the professor's speech. The extent to which the old man has labored on behalf of the Germans in the land liquidation matter is truly amazing; he labored day and night, not allowing himself any rest. He exerted every effort to influence the government's ministers, members of the Duma and of the Council to the end that this greatest of injustices not come to fruition. He is of the opinion that these laws would never have been promulgated if Russia had possessed what every other civilized nation possesses: a healthy public opinion. The old man is still remarkably vigorous, lively and possesses an unusually keen memory for persons. He still distinctly remembers B. very well from Moscow (the Moscow Congress – U)." B. H. Unruh, *Die Auswanderung*: 404.

101. Braun had apparently signed with a Dutch version of his name.
102. B. H. Unruh to Peter J. Braun, 28 October, 1926: *Peter J. Braun Correspondence*. Unruh must have received a reply from either Peter or Heinrich Braun to this letter. Is that why he does not name Heinrich as one of the two signatories in his November, 1927 letter to Gorter? There he places all of the blame on Thiessen. Could either the one or the other Braun have informed Unruh that Heinrich did indeed have an authorization – as the plenipotentiary of the Melitopol Mennonite landowners – to speak for the Mennonites back home?
103. In a subsequent portion of the letter Unruh observed: "The people in Stuttgart were very grateful to me for the corrections, and now this Mennonite article is regarded as the best in Berlin!!"
104. In the *A. A. Friesen Papers*. This statement attributed to the Tsar is not as far fetched as might at first appear, especially given the conditions laid out by the Taurida governor's office. For from at least 29 April, 1915 it was the "proof" for the Mennonite contention that was lacking. And Epp and Bergmann's pamphlet had, at the very least, provided some of this. There may also have been a different attitude toward the liquidation of Mennonite lands in the Taurida governor's office than the one emanating from St. Petersburg, as A. Rennikov implied in his 23 May, 1915 article in *Novoe Vremia*. We had already seen such a difference with regard to the censorship of Braun's pamphlet, and the conflict between Stolypin and the Taurida governor over H. J. Braun's "Baptist" activity.
105. *MR* (7 July, 1920): 13. Here the petition submitted by the Mennonite delegates appears to be separated from the Braun/Thiessen submission.
106. See the letter of Levi Mumaw and Orie O. Miller to the MCC of 15 March, 1922: "An official representative for all Mennonites in Russia, a Heinrich Braun from Halbstadt, arrived here [Constantinople] yesterday evening via Batoum and brought us the information about conditions in Batoum among the Mennonite refugees . . ." Mennonite Church Archives, Goshen, Ind., Constantinople File. In a report from Constantinople itself, dated 22 March, 1922, Braun wrote: "I left Molotschna on 9 January of this year as representative of hundreds of families, being commissioned to see what might be done in the matter of emigration . . .," *ibid*. The "commission" was written in ink on a piece of cloth and sewn inside of Heinrich Braun's clothing. That cloth "commission" is still in the possession of Irmgard Braun-Hörner of Ibersheim, Germany.
107. B. H. Unruh to A. A. Friesen, 19 June, 1922: *B. B. Janz Papers*. In a 17 June letter to B. H. Unruh from Oberursel, headquarters of the *Deutsche Mennoniten-Hilfe*,

H. J. Braun wrote after his discussion with Unruh: "I have now been sent out as the plenipotentiary of that group of petitioners and another 600 families that were added to it later to see what has happened or what might happen in this matter.

"In a discussion with members of the Studienkommission I discovered that Holland will not now allow groups to enter the country; therefore I requested the commission to order that the aforementioned petitions and lists be sent to me so that I might attempt to achieve that the Russian Mennonites be allowed entry into the land that will open its doors and save us. I request that this permission be sent to me under A. at the 'DMH.'

"I must take the opportunity at this time to say a few words of explanation regarding my mission.

"To begin with, the extraordinary authority granted me by the above-mentioned group in no way implies a rejection of the *Studienkommission*; rather, the action taken by the group that has entrusted me to represent it is not a means of separating itself from the whole, or an independent undertaking apart from the whole, but is simply an attempt to expedite making contact with foreign countries in order to get out of Russia more rapidly. Indeed, I must say that I have a direct commission from my group to get in touch with the *Studienkommission* and to work in co-operation with it. It is therefore neither the intent of my employers, nor do I have any personal inclinations to enter into competition with the *St. K.*; rather I intend to stay in intimate communication with the entire body of our Mennonite people in order to work together for the good of the whole.

"On the basis of what I have said I therefore request that the *Studienkommission* not allow any prejudice on their part, or any distrust to divide us, nor deny me the information I request. I, for my part, am ready to provide information or communication wherever I am able . . ."

108. See H. J. Braun's report on the trip in the *A. A. Friesen Papers*.
109. According to H. H. Schroeder, the arguments used in the document were based on Felicia Spzer's 1913 dissertation, as we have seen. Did that scholarly study allow for such a radical statement? Citing a variety of documents, reproduced in an appendix, Spzer made a powerful case for the Dutch origin of the Prussian (Danzig) Mennonites. This is a book Unruh studiously avoided citing in all of his studies on the origin of the Russian Mennonites until his 1955 study. But even at that, it was a stretch to claim that not a drop of German blood flowed in Russian Mennonite veins. If that were so, where did such Prussian Mennonites as Mannhardt, Lenzmann, etc., etc. come from if not from Pietist Lutheran families that had joined the Mennonite Church in Prussia? Indeed, many of the Gnadenfeld villages in the Molotschna colony consisted of such persons who had joined the Mennonites just before they left for Russia in 1835.
110. B. H. Unruh to B. B. Janz, 14 May, 1922: *B. B. Janz Papers*. See also Lindemann, *Von den deutschen Kolonisten*: 43.
111. Even though Bernard Pares, *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (London: Cassell Publ. Ltd., 1939): 411, reports that the appointment took place on 5 January, 1917, this date appears very late and contradicts what Rene Fullop-Miller, *Rasputin, The Holy Devil* (New York: Viking, 1978): 351, and Colin Wilson, *Rasputin and the Fall of the Romanovs* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Co., 1964): 195, assert. Indeed, in a letter of 13 December, 1916 from the Tsarina to her husband we read: "... And Dobrovolsky - a sure man - and quicker get rid of Makarov [the then Minister of Justice], who, do at last believe me, is a bad man." *The Letters of the Tsaritsa to the Tsar 1914 - 1916*: intro. Bernard Pares (London: Duckworth & Co., 1923): 453 - 454. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, Rasputin, according to

- Fulop-Miller (p. 350), received a telegram from the Tsar informing him of Dobrovolsky's appointment. And immediately after the assassination the latter, "who hastened to obey the Tsarina in everything" (Wilson, *Rasputin*: 195), refused to knuckle under to the Grand Dukes (Fulop-Miller,, pp. 366 - 377).
112. Edvard Radzinsky, *The Rasputin File* (New York: Doubleday, 2000): 275 - 276, "From Filipov's testimony: 'His [Rasputin's] secretaries, male and female, asked for and received enormous sums, of which only a third actually reached Rasputin's hands. The other tens of thousands remained in those of Simanovich, Volynsky, *Dobrovolsky*, and, towards the end, Reshetnikov."
  113. Pares, *Fall of the Romanov Dynasty*: 411.
  114. B. B. Wiens, "Ein neues Problem??" *Bote*, # 44 (31 October, 1934): 1.
  115. Then Minister of Internal Affairs.
  116. CSHAofR, Fond 1276, Opis 12, Delo 1455, page 7.
  117. *Ibid*: 7.
  118. *Ibid*: 14.
  119. *Ibid*: 9. It is unclear when Stishinsky's committee was constituted, but Eric Lohr, *Normalizing the Russian Empire*: 95 & 100, refers to a committee set up by the Council of Ministers in October of 1914, headed by Stishinsky to "rework the failed 1910 and 1912 bills into a far more radical measure. These radical measures became the basis for the land liquidation laws of 2 February and 15 December, 1915." So the very committee that formulated the liquidation laws in the first place was now to look into the Mennonite claim to be exempted from them.
  120. *Ibid*: 12.
  121. Rempel, *A Mennonite Family*: 322, note 4.
  122. Documents, p. 14.
  123. Undated note in Dobrovolsky's hand: *Ibid*: 10.
  124. Lindemann, *Von den deutschen Kolonisten*: 42. Once again, how much of this is Unruh's language rather than that of Lindemann?
  125. In an article published in the 11 July, 1917 issue of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, Abraham Kroeker wrote: "... Until now he [Braun] has been in hiding, living most of the time in Petrograd. H. Braun is now free and will hopefully return home in the next few days," p. 3.
  126. Peter J. Dyck, *Troubles and Triumphs, 1914-1924*: 22.

## CHAPTER 11

1. B. H. Unruh, "Autobiography," *Bote*, #37 (19 September, 1951): 3. Unruh had already made the same claim in his 1942-1943 manuscript, *Die Auswanderung*. There on page 179 he wrote: "B. H. Unruh had already indicated this process in some detail in a memorandum to his colleague A. A. Friesen, then, on the basis of a series of articles in the Canadian *Der Bote*, expanded upon it in a lecture at a conference hosted by the DAI (Deutsches Auslands Institut), and finally proven it scientifically in great detail in a monograph on the original homeland of the *niederdeutsche* [not *niederländisch-niederdeutsch* as the monograph later had it] Mennonite farmers in the Eastern regions, so that the question of origins, of which we are here talking, can be considered as essentially clarified . . ."
2. Quoted in Koch: *Volga German*: 240.
3. For a brief description of Stolypin's reforms, see Walsh, *Russia and the Soviet Union*: 336-346, and Ascher, *P. A. Stolypin*: 208-260.
4. B. H. Unruh, *Revolution und Reformation in Russland*: 21-24.



5. In 1921 Peter Braun (with the assistance of Peter Wall) wrote in "Die Mennoniten in Russland während des Bürgerkriegs (1917-1920)": "Neither the medics nor the Mennonite people as such stopped the conscientious fulfillment of their military and civic obligations even then when the tsarist government began to implement certain measures against them that restricted them in the exercise of their religious, national, and civic rights. For example . . . ." Document in the Mennonite Church Archives, Goshen, Ind., IX-1-1 *Russian Relief*, 2/10, Levi Mumaw General Correspondence, January to October, 1921.
6. See Peter Braun's "Wie in Russland die Bevölkerung entwaffnet wurde," in B. H. Unruh's *Die Auswanderung*: 421a, I-IV, excerpts from his diary.
7. H. J. Braun, "Die Hoffnungslose Lage der Mennoniten in Russland": *Ibid.* Published in the *MR* (3 May, 1922): 3-4.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Quoted in B. H. Unruh, *Die Auswanderung*: 202-203. The speech was probably written by Unruh himself.
10. B. H. Unruh, "The Background and Causes of the Flight of the Mennonites from Russia in 1929," *MQR*, vol. IV (October, 1930), #4:273.
11. John B. Toews, *Selected Documents*: 302-303. In a letter of 7 June, 1933 to Jacob H. Janzen, Peter Braun wrote: "I can picture the feelings that oppress you, and must oppress you, as a German in a racially alien state most graphically. I suffered most profoundly from the same feelings in Russia. Until World War I, I felt myself to be a Russian citizen; Germany was a foreign country to me. But the war brought one thing after another. The Russian intelligentsia decried us as traitors in the press and insulted us, the government refused to protect us and instead passed the land liquidation laws in order to drive us from hearth and home; and during the revolution and the attacks by the banditry the common people also turned against us. From discussions I had with the soldiers who were themselves sons of farmers, and from the attitude of the surrounding Russians it became dreadfully apparent to me: this Russian farmer, even though he may bear no personal animosity toward me, will not rest until he has driven the last German from his native soil and taken his place. In this way the government, the intelligentsia, and the common people had all turned against us; we, on the other hand, were strangers, indeed we had been thrown out. At that point I drew the consequences. I told myself: Russia is no longer your fatherland for it has expelled you; I no longer have any obligations to this country. There is only one country that can be my home and fatherland – that is Germany. Had I then had the opportunity I would have, without a moments hesitation, become a German. Later a lucky star actually led me to this place, and Germany accepted me with open arms as its legal son even though I was hopelessly ill and could not work. . . ." *Peter J. Braun Correspondence*. This came from the man who had written the "book" on the Dutch origin of the Russian Mennonites.
12. B. H. Unruh, "Peter J. Braun," *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch* (1952): 31.
13. Peter Braun, "Das Molotschnaer Mennonitische Lehrerseminar in Halbstadt: Deutsche Pädagogische Schule 1878-1922," A. A. *Friesen Papers*.
14. *Russian Relief*.

## CHAPTER 12

1. Unruh returned to this issue once more in his essay series entitled: "Praktische Fragen, 11c," *Bote* of 2 February, 1938. There he wrote: "The question, whether

- the Russian German settlements might have avoided their destiny had they given up the racial battle for self-determination, has been raised from many quarters." Whereas Mennonites repeatedly pointed to the racial or (to use Unruh's semi-Nazi terminology) *völkisch* aspect of the problem, they never, to my knowledge, drew attention to the religious aspect so central to Pobedonostsev's thinking.
2. Unruh expanded on this phrase in his *Die Auswanderung*, saying: "A turning aside from the road [marked out for us] by history and nature would have meant biological death within a brief period of time; it would have led to mixed marriages as well as to a renegade people. The colonists never denied that the Russian people and Russian culture should be dominant in the Russian state. . . . ***Sacrificing one's racial identity is suicide, as racial violation is death*** [my emphasis]. If a racial group has no possibility of retaining its natural and historical heritage in highest faithfulness to itself, there can only be one healthy way out for it: emigration or a return to its homeland," pp. 281-282.
  3. B. H. Unruh, "Praktische Fragen," *Bote*, #757 (23 March, 1938): 2. In a 14 May, 1922 memorandum to B. B. Janz, Unruh wrote: "I am personally of the opinion that Paraguay will come very much into consideration in a later large migration. I personally would very much regret if we were not able to settle in compact settlements once a mass emigration has become possible. But Canada has to be preferred for the current smaller emigration. A small group would probably not be able to establish itself in Paraguay . . . ." *B. B. Janz Papers*. And in conclusion he wrote, apropos his deterministic view of history: "As Christians we therefore believe ***that it was God's way with our fathers that they gained access to the German spirit. We do not wish to deny what Providence has given us in a history covering more than one hundred years*** [my emphasis]. To do so would be both unnatural and impious. One says of the Mennonites that for them the goal justifies the means. That would be terrible. Rather be wrong than be political," *ibid.*

In his *Die Auswanderung* Unruh quoted from the Friesen document cited below and interspersed his responses to Friesen's arguments. There he characterized the development in Friesen's thinking on the matter as follows: "A. A. Friesen evaluated the idea of assimilation from a purely theoretical point of view, but even he characterized an end of the 'German Mennonite' type to be a 'negative' development. But when it became apparent that a return to Germany had become an impossibility and emigration from the Soviet Union a dire necessity, and when concessions for the systematic cultivation of our *Deutschtum* overseas could only be secured in culturally backward countries (in Paraguay, at least for the moment), he recognized the threatening inevitability of a racial death . . . ," p. 282. I doubt that this was Friesen's motivation.

What is intriguing about this debate between Unruh and Friesen is the fact that early in 1929 (March) the same debate took place in the League of Nations. The Mueller Cabinet of the Weimar Republic discussed the matter at a meeting of 27 February, 1929. There the following was decided: "The German delegation in Geneva would, in the first instance, seek to change the method of procedure in the League of Nations, and do it in conjunction with the recommendations made by the Canadian representative. One would therefore have fundamentally to oppose the thesis presented in that body by Mr. Meelo-Franco and others that minorities in all states would have to assimilate with time." *Akten der Reichskanzlei Weimarer Republik*: vol. I, *Das Kabinett Mueller II*, ed., Martin Vogt (Boppard a/Rh.: Harald Boldt Verlag, 1970), document # 137: 452. At a later meeting of 12 March, 1929 Foreign Minister Curtius reported on the German memoran-

dum on the matter: "In this regard he explained in detail," the minutes of the meeting record, "that the German memorandum would naturally especially forcefully reject the theory of assimilation, i.e., the demand that minorities be completely assimilated in the ruling countries. For even Mr. Chamberlain had now distanced himself from this theory. Furthermore, the demand that a permanent commission on minorities be established by the League of Nations must be kept alive," *ibid*: document # 171: 546. It is interesting, though perhaps not accidental, that Friesen should side with the British/Canadian view and Unruh with the German.

4. How is this viewpoint different from that of Pobedonostsev? The language may be different – i.e. more overtly deterministic – but the consequences are the same. No wonder the two sides clashed over assimilation.
5. Unruh appears to have conceded Friesen's argument after the settlement of Mennonites in Paraguay. Writing to Emil Haendiges on 25 August, 1933, he referred to the problems in that settlement, observing: "... I cannot deny that we Mennonites in Russia, precisely because of our isolationist religious and cultural attitude and situation, viewed strangers and unfamiliar things with the greatest suspicion. Added to that, the Colony Fernheim expressly desired to get doctors that share their religious perspective. . . ." *Benjamin H. Unruh Papers*
6. Yet in a passage of his *Revolution und Reformation*, he described the Russian's "nature" in the following terms: "The Russian man is emotional. He is as soft as a child, as a woman. The intellectual recedes behind his emotions, behind the irrational . . ." If this were the case, could the Russian have acted against his nature? And if not, was it not "useless" to criticize him?
7. *Ibid*: 22-23.
8. Jacob H. Janzen, "Kirche und Staat," *Bote*, #23 (6 June, 1934): 1, wrote: "The concept of a 'Menno-Volk' or a Mennonite 'Völklein' first became traditional in Russia where we lived for over 150 years under separate laws that, uninfluenced by us, had been granted by the Russian government in order to make it impossible for us to proselytize for our faith among non Mennonites. The logical consequence of this was that we possessed our own village organizations (municipalities) and volost administrations (township councils), even in those regions where individual Mennonite estates and villages were interspersed in compact Russian settlements. . . Thus did the Mennonites in Russia literally become a state within a state, and we learned to see ourselves not only as a religious community but as a people of a peculiar race, a peculiar culture and language. There were compelling reasons for such a development in Russia."
 

Already in his manuscript, "Die Entstehung des Verbandts der Bürger holländischer Herkunft in der Ukraine," of 6 June, 1922 he had written: "... There have always been people, both inside and outside of our circles, who have perceived a dissonance between the terms 'Mennonite' and 'Economic Association.' For it is undeniably the case that the term 'Mennonite' has the aura of religion about it no matter how much one may speak – not to say prattle on – about a Mennonite evolution from the religious to the national. If one now adds 'economic association' to it, we again have the same impractical half religious half secular terminology which we already recognized to be impotent at our pre-flood general conferences." *B. B. Janz Papers*.
9. In a letter of 18 April, 1922 to the German *Mennonitische Flüchtlingsfürsorge* [the MFF], Braun wrote: "Prior to the war we – I mean the Germans of South Russia [had he not earlier called them "Dutch"?] – were in fairly constant touch with the German world of ideas. The scholarly connections between here and there

during the last number of years had become both more intimate and more active: letters and news traveled back and forth, newspapers and books from there were our daily intellectual food – especially the books. Ah, that irreplaceable, unforgettable German book – only now do we realize how much it gave us and what it meant to us! Then the calamitous war came. Suddenly all ties to Germany were severed, all contacts destroyed, nothing arrived from there and nothing was sent from here. At that point the great tribulation began, for you as well as for us. An interminable hope for, yet fear of, the outcome of the great conflict of nations [gripped us]; our fear and worry concerning the fate of our hard-pressed old homeland [Germany] increased; to all of this was added an emotional suffering, a suffering that reached deep into our very souls. Gradually, under these circumstances, it became ever more apparent to us whose spiritual children we were, where we really belonged, for whom our hearts beat. *The summer months of 1918* [when the German troops were in Halbstadt] *influenced and solidified this process of clarification even more* [my emphasis]. We had been awakened out of our blissful childhood slumber to a national consciousness; the result was that we suddenly felt ourselves lonesome and God-forsaken, no longer having contact with Germany, and over here having lost the ground from under us. Nevertheless, we had achieved inner clarity as to who we really were. In spite of having been separated from the German race all these years, we have felt for them and suffered with them; now we dare to hope that we have drunk the last dregs of suffering. Whatever may come, this recognized truth has profoundly penetrated our consciousness, and we both desire and intend to cherish and assert our Germanness now more than ever after the difficult experiences of the last years . . .” *Peter J. Braun Correspondence*.

10. See especially John Thiesen, *Mennonite & Nazi?* (Scottsdale, PA. & Waterloo, Ont.: Pandora Press, 1999), on the basic problem but not on this particular issue. There were, of course, many additional components to this attraction which I hope to explore in a future essay.
11. But Friesen, like Unruh, does not seem to have understood the Russian point of view. Had he done so, he could not have compared the Russian situation to that of Canada and the United States.
12. It is ironic that Unruh, the most ardent advocate of this “Mennonite ideal,” ended up in Germany as a defender of Nazism where no such ideal either could or did exist; so much for idealism.
13. Here one sees the schizoid nature of the Russian Mennonite soul. On the one hand, speaking intellectually and culturally, Peter Braun, in his 18 April, 1922 letter to the MFF, could affirm his *Deutschtum* with some passion and conviction. But on the basis of national character traits, Friesen could assert the essential Dutch nature of the Russian Mennonite.
14. For confirmation of Friesen’s assessment, see Robert Kreider’s “The Anabaptist Conception of the Church in the Russian Mennonite Environment,” *MQR* (January, 1951): 17-33.
15. Friesen, “Betrachtungen,” p. 10.
16. In this entire discussion, however, there is not even a mention of the fact that both the United States and Canada, as countries consisting primarily of immigrants, might be more hospitable to another ethnic minority seeking sanctuary from one or another form of oppression; or whether the United States, as an ethnic “melting pot,” might be more hospitable to the Mennonites than Canada as an “ethnic mosaic.”
17. The above assessment is confirmed by Dr. Alfred Neufeld of Asuncion, Paraguay, in

a very recent talk, which I encountered after the chapter had been written, entitled: "Gemeinde der Glaubenden oder Mennonitische Volksgemeinschaft: Ethnokonfessionalität als Mennonitisches Problem." There he wrote: "It was a rather naïve dream of both Harold S. Bender and B. H. Unruh, expressed at the Mennonite World Conference held in Danzig in 1930, to erect a kind of 'Mennonite republic' here in the Central Chaco. This concept has, as of today, led us into a crisis of identity from which only powerful, biblically based congregations can extricate us. We MBs can and must make a fundamental contribution [to the solution of this problem] by returning to our historical roots." My attention was drawn to this unpublished paper by Paul Toews, Director of the Fresno Center. Had Neufeld had an understanding of the Russian Mennonite background of this "deceptive dream," he could have set his paper into a larger context. To what extent Bender shared Unruh's vision in this matter is not at all clear in my mind as yet.

## CHAPTER 13

1. In his *Die Auswanderung*, p. 278, Benjamin Unruh argued that the *Herkunftsfrage* was "the most important question that confronted the general public in the Mennonite settlements and congregations in the East during the World War . . . ."
2. This statement could well be a commentary on the differences between the first and second editions of Braun's *Kto takie Mennonity*. No doubt Braun's piece and the issues related to it must have been one of the matters they discussed as they sat in Braun's garden on a bench. In his tribute to Braun, Wiens made the point that such discussions had been both intimate and wide-ranging.
3. B. B. Wiens, "Ein neues Problem??" *Bote*, #44 (31 October, 1934): 1. He began this part by saying: "In the eyes of our surrounding Russian population we were regarded to be Germans. We did not object to this for we felt ourselves to be Germans."
4. Perhaps some sense of where Russian Mennonites stood on the matter can be gleaned from the fact that in a later Canadian census some 60 to 90% of them declared themselves to be of Dutch ancestry. See the doctoral dissertation of Frank H. Epp, *An Analysis of Germanism and National Socialism in the Immigrant Newspaper of a Canadian Minority Group, the Mennonites, in the 1930s* (University of Minnesota, 1965): 106. This evidence would tend to contradict B. H. Unruh's statement in his *Die Auswanderung*, p. 279, where he wrote: "The Mennonite farmers in the Black Sea region, even in the full knowledge of their largely Frisian-Flemish descent, passionately declared themselves in village gatherings, even at the time they were most active in their attempts to undermine the land liquidation laws, to be of Germanic ancestry, saying: 'Wie send Dietsch!' (We are Germans!)" Even if true – and the assertion must be doubted in light of the evidence presented in the last section – Unruh should have known that the pronouncements of historically ignorant Russian Mennonite villagers could not so simply solve this complex issue.

A little later he continued: "The Mennonites made their appearance in the East as descendants of the Germans and continually maintained that position throughout. In their self-designation 'Dietsch' they combined their *Deutschtum* with their Frisian-Flemish roots. To regard this self-designation as a departure from *das Deutschtum* would be to think in terms of a small or circumscribed Germany; on the other hand, it would be Low German chauvinistic thinking if one were, in an attempt to equate the Frisian-Flemish Mennonite settler in the East

- with the rest of the carriers of German settlements in the region who came from German provinces, to call them racially (völkish) 'unfaithful' or even insinuate that they represent a decline in racial purity . . ."
5. Peter Braun, *Denn Er wird meinen Fuss aus der Schlinge Ziehen*: 11.
  6. B. H. Unruh, "Praktische Fragen," *Bote*, #4 (27 January, 1937): 2. As we shall see, however, Unruh's position was not as monolithic as he would have liked his readers to believe. Not even he was above reading back into the past positions he only arrived at later when he began to write for the public on the issues.
  7. There were a good number of leading Russian Mennonites aside from H. J. Braun, Abraham Kroeker, et.al., who advocated the "Dutch" theory of Russian Mennonite origins during the war years as well as later. We have seen David H. Epp and H. A. Bergmann do so in an official 1915 document. Heinrich Epp, director of the Chortiza *Lehrer Seminar*, in his "Die Bedeutung der mennonitischen Kolonisation in Russland," *Bote* (11 June, 1924): 3, speaks of their "Dutch ancestry." Cornelius Krahn, in his "Some Social Attitudes of Mennonites in Russia," *MQR*, IX (October, 1935), #4: 169, quotes Adolf Ehrh, a German scholar, approvingly who wrote that "one recognizes the Dutch in the Mennonite." David G. Rempel, the dean of Russian Mennonite scholars, in his "The Expropriation of German Colonists," speaks of them as "Dutch Mennonites," p. 50. These were all men who came out of Russia but went to Canada or the United States, rather than to Germany. A. A. Friesen – and, as we shall yet see, B. B. Janz – also were convinced of the Dutch origin of the Russian Mennonites. In his 1921 "Betrachtungen" he wrote: "It is a misunderstanding when some among us assume that we are German; we are not. We have to regard those who spent their formative years studying in Germany and there absorbed the German spirit as exceptions; but even they repeatedly manifest strong tendencies reminiscent of their old native nature . . ." As we shall see, it was those who emigrated from Russia to Germany during these years and in doing so came under Nazi influence who sought to deny the Dutch origin of the Russian Mennonites.
  8. Kroeker's article must therefore have been written about the time of the meeting of Melitopol land owners where H. J. Braun was elected their plenipotentiary and the Mennonites submitted their first set of petitions regarding the matter to the Tsar.
  9. Abraham Kroeker, "Aus Halbstadt, Russland," *MR* (21 July, 1915): 3-4. That German Mennonites would take exception to this argument was already indicated in a 1912 review of P. M. Friesen's history by Hinrich van der Smissen, editor of the *MBI*. There van der Smissen criticized Friesen for paying far too much attention to the Dutch/Russian wing of the movement and too little to the larger picture drawn by Keller, Wedel, and Christine Hege – which even the Dutch considered "too German." He denied Friesen's argument that the Hamburg/Altona congregation was of purely Dutch origin; German and Flemish/Frisian elements had come together in it. But he mentioned only the Roosen family as coming from solidly Germanic stock. Could a member of a Dutch Mennonite family long resident in Germany be any more impartial on the matter than the Russian Mennonites? H. van der Smissen, "Was können wir aus P. Friesens Geschichte lernen?" *MBI*, #11 (November 1912): 83.
  10. N. [?], "Die Zukunft unserer deutsch-russischen Brüder," *MBI*, #1 (January, 1916): 6-7.
  11. C. M. t[en] C[ate], "Das Los unserer russischen Brüder in holländischer Beleuchtung," *MBI*, #4 (April, 1916): 26-27.
  12. It is interesting to note in what a condescending manner both writers address the

- matter of the Russian Mennonites' nonresistance. Van der Smitten, for example, saying: "We Germans make no attempt to try to hide the fact that, while we honor the history of our forefathers' absolute nonresistance, the vast majority of us neither can nor want to maintain it given the German circumstances . . ." *Ibid*: 27.
13. *Ibid*. Whereas German Mennonites appear to have been very much aware of the Russian Mennonites' use of the "Dutch" argument, this does not appear to have been the case among the Dutch Doopsgezinde. At least T. O. Hylkema, *De Geschiedenis van De Doopsgezinde Gemeenten in Rusland in de oorlogs- en revolutiejaren 1914 tot 1920* (Steenwijk: G. Hovens Greve, 1921): 35-39 – the relevant passage that deals with the land liquidation laws – makes no mention of it.
  14. Is there such a thing as a "racial" interpretation of Anabaptism? A Swiss form? A Dutch form? An Austrian form? A German form? One conditioned by the Russian, American or Latin American environment?
  15. H. van der Smitten, "Der Ursprung der deutschen Mennoniten," *MBI*, #3 (March, 1917): 22-23.
  16. It amazes me that especially those who settled in Germany after this experience could become, as we shall see, such ardent supporters of the Hitler dictatorship.
  17. Various writings of Benjamin H. Unruh.
  18. For another vivid description, aside from that of Peter Braun in the letter to his brother, see Theodor Block, "Die Mennoniten und die anarchistische Bewegung in Süd-Russland," *MR* (15 September, 1920): 10-11.
  19. In his *Lebenslauf* H. J. Braun writes: ". . . But in October, 1917 the bloody revolution erupted. In March, 1918 the Germany army invaded the Ukraine in order to free us from the Bolsheviks. I was given the commission to greet it in the name of the Mennonite Brethren. The revolutionaries hated me because of it. Later, in 1920, when General Wrangel entered our colony with the 'White Army' I received the same commission . . ." *H. J. Braun Nachlass*.
  20. *Peter J. Braun Correspondence*. How did Braun reconcile such sentiments with the fact that, in their "Dutch" argument, they had, in effect, rejected "everything German"?
  21. In his *Gesichtspunkte für die Sammlung und Sichtung des in unseren Dörfern vorhandenen historischen Materials*, written in June of 1917 as a guide to the collection of archival materials, Peter Braun included the following category for the post World War I period: "The awakening of a sense of German nationalism at the beginning of the revolution: the attempt to create organizations for the purpose of participating in the social-political life of the State in order to promote German culture." B. H. Unruh, *Die Auswanderung*: 144. Clearly, Braun saw the beginning of the process he talked about in the above letter as taking place at the end of the war.
  22. Original in the possession of Irmgard Braun-Hörner. Also published in the *MR* (9 October, 1918): 11-12; and (23 October, 1918): 10. B. H. Unruh, *Die Auswanderung*, p. 183 (19), #283, quoted a description taken from the *Volksfreund* of the day after the event which stated: "19 April (new style) will always remain a memorable date in the history of the German Molotschna colony. Something that only a short time ago would have been inconceivable has happened: the German army has come here in order to free us from the despotism and violation of brutal people and to restore order and the security of life and property . . ." And of the actual encounter at the railroad station, the article stated: "One can hardly describe the welcome [the German soldiers] received upon their arrival. One had to have been there!"
  23. In his manuscript, "Die Wehrlosigkeit der Mennoniten in Russland nach dem

Weltkrieg," B. B. Janz wrote of what happened after the arrival of the Germans: "Now telephones were installed throughout the colony, to be sure for military purposes. For a hundred years these wealthy colonies had disdained to do it for peaceful purposes. At the head and leading each group there were Germans. The surrounding Russian villages saw and heard everything. They had had their weapons taken away, but the two Mennonite volosts, Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld as well as neighboring Lutheran and Catholic volost, Prischib, were armed. The Russians were not accustomed to this from the quiet Mennonites, for they knew how the Mennonite youths had, for 38 years, served in the nearby Alt Berdjan Forestry Camp because of their faith and never picked up a rifle. That inflamed them . . .," p. 4. *B. B. Janz Papers*, folder 125.

On 31 October, 1920 Orie Miller wrote to J. S. Shoemaker of the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities: "The Mennonites of South Russia have in practice given up the Nonresistance idea, but not in theory. It seems that the German occupation of 1918, when guns were given to all the civilian population fired up some Mennonite young men, and when the Germans had to leave, they felt it their duty to protect themselves from their invaders, and a small group of Mennonite men did this most effectively for a period of months. Since then there have [been] more or less of them fighting as actual soldiers on the side of the Whites. Wrangel himself does not insist on this, and has provided that any conscientious objector can do service in the sanitary department of the army . . ." Mennonite Church Archive, "Russian Relief," Box I, *General Correspondence 1918-1920*.

24. See especially Gerald Freund, *Unholy Allianz: Russian-German Relations from the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk to the Treaty of Berlin* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1957): 1-33.
25. Orlando Figes, *A Peoples Tragedy*: 540-549. On Brest-Litovsk, see Marshall Dill, Jr., *Germany, A Modern History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961): 218-251; Walsh, *Russia and the Soviet Russia*: 392-414; and Gordon A. Craig, *Germany 1860-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978): 386-402.
26. See also Unruh, *Die Auswanderung*: 158.
27. "Unsere grosse Vaterlandsliebe," p.11.
28. Apparently Mennonites began to investigate this possibility even before their encounter with Pastor Winkler described below. See Unruh, *Die Auswanderung*: 145-146.
29. See also: "Schädigung deutsch-russischer Rückwanderer," *MBI* (December 1919), #12: 92-93.
30. See B. H. Unruh. "Der Friedensvertrag von Brest-Litovsk und die Russland-deutschen," *Bote*, (22 June, 1938): 4. For the actual terms of the German-Ukrainian Treaty, see H. van der Smissen, "Der Friedensschluss mit der Ukraine," *MBI* (February, 1918), #2: 10-11.
31. Page 121.
32. In his 1938 article on the Brest-Litovsk Treaty cited above, Unruh writes: "In this manner the door to the motherland was opened wide for the Russian Germans. It was on the basis of these provisions that it was determined to send a [Mennonite] delegation to Berlin in the summer of 1918. They also determined all later negotiations. The Rappallo Treaty produced a change in this regard." *Ibid*. The Rappallo Treaty between Germany and the Soviet Union was signed on 16 April, 1922.
33. In his 1951 autobiography Unruh wrote: "Our congregations demonstrated good sense when they refused to send Johann Willms as the only delegate to Berlin but provided him with two consulting partners. At the same time, A. A. Friesen went to Berlin with a Lutheran landowner from the Crimea. There, supported by the



- representative of the Volga Germans, Pastor Schleuning, we defeated Winkler's political scheme. Willms then moved away from Winkler at the second Ohrloff Congress of September, 1918 . . . ." Benjamin H. Unruh, *Bote*, #35 (5 September, 1951): 3. See also Unruh's *Die Auswanderung*: 148. On p. 430 Unruh indicated that Willms had become disillusioned with repatriation during their stay in Berlin in 1918, saying: "The disappointments we experienced in Berlin in the summer of 1918 made it impossible for him to consider broader European possibilities."
34. In his memoirs, Ludendorff observed only: "It was only to protect and foster German *Kultur* that I went beyond immediate military requirements and thought of the future. That did not involve any expenditure of military resources. I wanted to strengthen and consolidate German national spirit, and thus increase its influence. Some of my acquaintances had placed a substantial sum of money at my disposal for this end. I used it to support the German national Press in Austria. I steadily furthered my pet scheme of settling the isolated Germans scattered throughout Russia, side by side with our soldiers, in the Eastern districts. In this matter I made myself the advocate of Germanism against the Government. *I rejected as fantastic, however, such proposals as the foundation of a German colonial state on the Black Sea* [my emphasis]." General Ludendorff, *My War Memoirs 1914-1918*, vol. II (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1933): 661. Unruh and his fellow Mennonites spent about two months in Berlin on this mission.
  35. The delegation was told in Berlin, according to Unruh, that a repatriation of the colonists, Mennonites included, was no longer possible. Unruh, *Die Auswanderung*: 151.
  36. Benjamin Unruh to Peter Braun, p. 4, 28 October, 1926: *Peter J. Braun Correspondence*. Also Benjamin Unruh to B. B. Janz, 19 May, 1922: *B. B. Janz Papers*.
  37. Abraham Warkentin, in a memorandum to Wm. J. Ewert, secretary of the Hillsboro, KS relief organization, of 30 September, 1921 wrote: "A small side road was now opened which many will now want to travel. During the German occupation [of the Ukraine] a good number of Mennonites took steps to become German citizens. The German military officials agreed with this and provided a rather large number of Mennonites with provisional papers. Now the persons involved refer back to the citizenship they acquired at that time and are attempting to get permission to enter Germany. A number of years ago I already received a letter concerning this matter, and in the last days I have received news that a Br. Jacob Wiebe from the Trakt in the vicinity of Samara has arrived here and is trying to get the government to allow the Trakt settlers to enter the country. If the government here will recognize the documents earlier handed out by military officials [in the Ukraine], then we will more than likely soon be getting a new influx of refugees, for the Russian government is granting foreigners an unhindered departure . . . ."
  38. "Russian Relief": Mennonite Church Archives, Goshen, Ind. In his *Die Auswanderung*, p. 160, Unruh wrote: "The news, 'that Germany wished once more to accept colonists as belonging to the Reich' on the basis of the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty enthused the despairing farmers. 'But it remained a dream.'"
  39. Theo Block, "Der Selbstschutz der Kolonisten Tauriens (1919 u. 1920)," *MBI*, #11 (November, 1921): 91, argues that the greater part of these were useless drunken ruffians, with one exception – a man by the name of Malakov.
  40. See especially Theodor Block, "Die Flucht der Molotschnaer Kolonien (10./11. März 1919)," *MBI* (October, 1921), #10: 76-77; Heinrich Holzrichter, "Flüchteten nach der Krim vor den 'Roten,'" *MR* (11 August, 1920): 14; and "Die Mennoniten in der Ukraine nach dem Abzug der deutschen Truppen bis jetzt," *MBI* (July,

- 1920), #7: 51-54.
41. See especially J. G. Ewert, "Die neue Leidenszeit in Südrussland," *MR* (5 May, 1920): 11-12; and, *ibid.* (19 May, 1920): 12-13.
  42. On 4 July, 1919, Peter Braun wrote in his diary: "Yesterday, 3 July, the German second lieutenant Tam spoke, in a small circle, about the formation of a German armed force consisting of colonist sons for the purpose of protecting the hinterland, as they had begun to do in the Crimea (Homeyer's and Warkentin's detachment). They also appear to have political goals in mind in doing so. *The danger of doing this, that is creating a national armed force here, was pointed out since we live in the midst of the Russians and such action would only exacerbate instead of diminish the national antagonism. Already the history of the Selbstschutz (1918/19) had clearly demonstrated this, even though the issue had not yet been colored by politics . . .* [my emphasis]." B. Unruh, *Die Auswanderung*: 427.
  43. Theo Block, *op. cit.*, p. 86, denies this. But Orie Miller, writing to Levi Mumaw on 28 November 1920 observed, referring to the *Selbstschützer* (60 in number) who escaped to Constantinople and later came to the United States: ". . . Schroeder [H. H., a leader of these in the Molotschna] knows most of these men personally, many of their parents in Russia are very wealthy . . ." "IX-1-1 Russia Relief 2/10," *Levi Mumaw General Correspondence January to October 1921*. Mennonite Church Archives. As the Red Army moved into Halbstadt after the final retreat of Wrangel's army, the following event, described in an anonymous piece in B. B. Janz's papers, is said to have taken place: "On the third day after Malachov's letter, the army, under the leadership of Commander-in-Chief Didenko, inundated the colony. Two brothers had the courage to go to meet the commander. They were: teacher and preacher C. Martens from the Gnadenfeld School of Commerce, and C. J. Derksen, now living in Yarrow, B. C.  
 "The situation is terrible! The village of Gnadenfeld is surrounded by sharpshooters. What will happen in the next moments? Armed to the teeth and astride horses the army pours into the village, heading for the volost headquarters, with Didenko at their head. At this point the two men approach him and C. M. pleads: 'Gospodin, Didenko, prostate nas. Didenko Sir, forgive us.' And then it comes: 'You damned apostates from the faith of your fathers, for 400 years you could not take any weapons into your hands, but now, on behalf of your damned Kaiser Wilhelm, now . . .,' they had to hear this three more times: 'You damned apostates from the faith of your fathers.'" *B. B. Janz Papers*, p. VIII.  
 One anonymous escapee from Nikolaipol wrote: "The national hatred, fanned by the Tsarist government, had received new nourishment through the energetic intervention of the Germans and was now skillfully utilized by the various dark forces . . ." Unruh, *Die Auswanderung*: 161.
  44. See B. Unruh, *Die Auswanderung*: 199-201.
  45. *Ibid.*: 202-208.
  46. In an anonymous document entitled: "Unsere grosse Vaterlandsliebe u. Treue zum Kaisertrone erhält einen Schlag und wird schwer geprüft" in the *B. B. Janz Papers*, the author wrote: "Despite the fact that Wrangel's army was beaten, Warkentin managed to get the *Studienkommission* out of the country by way of Constantinople. In this instance, too, it was C. H. W. who, by means of a telegram to his son H. Warkentin [in Rotterdam], Holland, acted as door handle to facilitate their continued voyage to Holland via Switzerland." *B. B. Janz Papers*.
  47. MS. 60, A. A. *Friesen Papers*.
  48. Dr. Vissering was president of the Dutch National Bank. See Unruh, *Die Auswan-*

*derung*: 552c.

49. The *Studienkommission*, although bringing only worthless Russian rubles out of the Ukraine with them, left Amsterdam for New York aboard the *Moorham* – all traveling first class – on 9 June, 1920. *Ibid.*
50. *Ibid.*
51. Mr. G. Vissering an den Wedel Geboren Heer L. Kiesing, Amsterdam, 5 June, 1920. *Ibid.*
52. J. B. Toews, "Die Tätigkeit Benjamin Heinrich Unruhs während der Auswanderung aus Russland in den Jahren 1919-1923" writes: "Since the Russian brethren placed nearly all their expectations upon Holland, Unruh had . . ." *MBI*, XXVI, No. 21 (1969): 33.
53. B. Unruh to A. A. Friesen. 11 November, 1920. *Ibid.*
54. *Ibid.*
55. In a memorandum to T. O. Hylkema, a Dutch Mennonite pastor who played a signal role in helping the *Studienkommission* upon Unruh's return from America, the latter encouraged Hylkema to use materials from a Dutch perspective, even articles written by the South African Boers about the Russian Mennonites in his negotiations with the British government. See insert 448a in Unruh's *Die Auswanderung*: 498a. Hylkema also published a booklet on the plight of the Russian Mennonites in 1921 entitled: *De geschiedenis van De Doopsgezinde Gemeenten in Rusland in de oorlogs- en revolutie jaren 1914 tot 1920* (Steenwijk: G. Hovens Greve, n.d.). In it he wrote, regarding the origin of the Russian Mennonites: "The Russian Doopsgezinde are descendants of our Dutch Doopsgezinde," p. 8. Unruh himself promoted the volume wherever he could in order to stimulate Dutch interest in helping the Russian brothers. A German translation – no author named, but it is clearly Hylkema's book – appeared in 1921 entitled: *Die Mennoniten-Gemeinden in Russland während der Kriegs und Revolutionsjahre 1914 bis 1920* (Heilbronn a/Neckar: Kommissions-Verlag der Mennoniten Flüchtlingsfürsorge E. V., 1921). Apparently Hylkema did not wish his name attached to the nearly simultaneous German translation, but no reason is given. There are some subtle differences, however, that reveal Unruh's hand in the translation. For example, the passage we quoted from page 8 in this note stated: "De Doopsgezinden in Rusland *stammen af van onze Nederlandsche Doopsgezinden.*" The statement is exclusive and leaves little doubt as to Hylkema's meaning. In the German translation, however, Unruh intruded a modifier, thus: "The Mennonites in Russia are largely of Dutch Mennonite ancestry," p. 8. Though this is the only modification in the first section of the text, entitled "Concerning the Origin of the Russian Mennonites," it is a significant one and clearly points to Unruh's arbitrary decision on the matter made at the 1917 Congress of German Colonists in Moscow. In later parts of the German translation longer sections are inserted, as for example, Paul I's great *Privilegium* on pp. 14-16; then a lengthy section dealing primarily with Russian Mennonite education on pp. 18-19, etc. A considerable number of pictures are added (there are none in the Dutch edition), as on pp. 17, 19, 25, 32, 36, 37, 41, 44, 48, 53, 58, 89, 108, 110. One map is added to the text itself that speaks of the "German" colonies of South Russia; two more maps are loosely inserted between the front and back covers, one of which also speaks of the Russian Mennonite colonies as "German." In all of these things, Unruh's hand is visible.
56. See B. B. Janz's memorandum to B. H. Unruh from Kharkov of 12 March, 1922: A. A. Friesen Papers.
57. B. B. Janz to President Harding, 20 November, 1921: A. A. Friesen Papers.

58. B. B. Janz to the Queen of Holland, 22 December, 1921. *Ibid.* This is the only document I have seen where this claim is made.
59. B. B. Janz to the Canadian Government, 23 December, 1921. *Ibid.*
60. A. A. Friesen to the U S President, 15 February, 1922. *Ibid.* Only in Janz's letter to the Republic of Paraguay of 16 March, 1921 is there no mention whatever of their Dutch origin.
61. See B. B. Janz's report to the *Studienkommission* of 28 February, 1922. Mennonite Church Archives: IX-I-I, "Russian Relief." The very day the article appeared in *Hammer and Sickle*, a Mr. Willink, representative of a Dutch Mennonite relief agency, arrived in the colonies. Janz saw this as a good omen, for under his auspices another round of attempts was made to be repatriated to the Netherlands.
62. By the Checka; see Braun's description, taken from his diary, in Unruh, *Die Auswanderung*: 402-405.
63. John B. Toews, *Lost Fatherland*: 96-97.
64. Another proof, if it were needed, that people knew that Peter Braun had written the original piece.
65. Peter Braun to B. B. Janz and Ph. Cornies, 6 August, 1922: *Peter J. Braun Correspondence*. Braun concluded by saying: "Well, then, I am very sorry to say so, but this time I really cannot be of any service."
66. B. B. Janz Report to the *Studienkommission*, 28 February, 1922: *A. A. Friesen Papers*.
67. *B. B. Janz Papers*.
68. If one can infer from this passage and others in which Unruh attacked the December 1916/January, 1917 Braun/Thiessen submission to the imperial government, then Unruh may well have "explain[ed] the matter" by putting the blame on H. J. Braun. He does so repeatedly in his articles and correspondence, as we have already seen. Now, the German government, like the article in the *Jahrbuch*, may not even have been aware of this submission. Indeed, thus far it has not even been located in the St. Petersburg archives. But in order to deflect that government's displeasure from the Russian Mennonites as such, Unruh may well have sought to "explain the matter" as the work of "rogue" individuals who acted without authority and in opposition to the wishes of the people back home. This was, after all, his later public argument. But that argument may have had disastrous consequences for H. J. Braun in Germany. For unlike his brother Peter, who was granted German citizenship nearly immediately upon his arrival in the country, H. J. Braun's requests to be naturalized were repeatedly turned down. He never was granted German citizenship.
69. Benjamin Unruh to B. B. Janz, 14 May, 1922: *B. B. Janz Papers*. The letter was written on 14 May, 1922, the Rapallo Treaty between Russia and Germany signed on 16 April, 1922. In his article on Brest-Litovsk, Unruh had observed that the latter treaty had changed the conditions of re-entry into Germany laid out in the treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Unruh's letter, written less than a month after the secret signing of the Rapallo agreement, can hardly as yet have been informed by the new conditions. At least his negotiations with the German authorities must still have been carried on under the terms laid out in the treaty of Brest-Litovsk. If, now, the Germans had become aware of the Russian Mennonites' "Dutch" argument – as they obviously had – and they recalled the Mennonite delegation to Berlin in the summer of 1918 seeking to be repatriated to their *Stammland*, what must they have thought! What must they have said to Unruh: Crass opportunists, these Mennonites? They were Germans when it was to their advantage to be so, Dutch when it was disadvantageous. More than that, they had, as Peter

- Braun the younger argued, "been forced to emphasize [during the war] the fact that [they] wanted nothing to do with these barbarians."
70. Unruh, *Die Auswanderung*: 519, (insert, p. 5).
  71. *Jahrbuch des Vereins für das Deutschtum im Ausland* (Berlin, 1922): 121.
  72. This concept, already in play politically because of Germany's loss of territories to Poland after WWI, was to become a major aspect of *Ostforschung* during the Weimar period, but especially under the Nazis, in order to justify an eventual reacquisition by Germany of territories lost in the East. The merger between *Ostforschung* and Nazi politics after 1933 has been investigated by Michael Burleigh in his *Germany Turns Eastward: A Study of Ostforschung in the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). To what extent Unruh became a party to these efforts is unclear, but that the emphasis was already in play during the Weimar period is made apparent by Counselor Jung's and the journal's accusations.
  73. B. H. Unruh to B. B. Janz, 14 May, 1922: *B. B. Janz Papers*.
  74. Peter Braun, Jr., Jacob's son, wrote – in contrast – in his *Denn Er Wird Meinen Fuss aus der Schlinge Ziehen*: "It was as though we had comprehended for the first time that we belonged, at least in terms of our language, to the German Reich. Why then had we come to the world in Russia? It was an error, *a joke played on us by Providence. How careless of Providence!* Why had they not allowed our forefathers their peculiar religious lifestyle, to live by their modest but practical ritual? Certainly, one was humane in Germany, in the present German Reich. In the Soviet Union the religion of the *apparatchiks* impinged upon the animated faith of the sons of Menno," p. 40.
  75. B. H. Unruh to Peter Braun, 18 June, 1926: *Peter J. Braun Correspondence*. In his letter to B. B. Janz of 14 May, 1922, however, he had written, encouraging Janz to cooperate with the German colonists: "The caption of the German colonists does not please me in the least! It is a very naïve publicity-seeking choice: 'Germanic race'! The Mennonite spirit instinctively resists such racial ideology. Even in politics one must always remain plain and simple. But since both children have now been christened, please try to allow them to form a closer relationship on a healthy basis. The 'Germanic race,' as is well known, also includes the 'Hollanders.' I suppose neither side can dispense without the quotation marks. That is the comical aspect of the matter." But by 1935 Unruh was beginning to take this "germanischer Rasse" stuff more seriously. See especially his "Vorfragen zur wissenschaftlichen Klärung der Herkunft des russlanddeutschen Mennonitentums," *MR*, #23 (12 June, 1935): 4, where Nazi racial theories begin to enter into his thinking on the matter of the national origins of the Russian Mennonites.
  76. For the extent of the union, see Burleigh, *Germany Turns Eastward*.
  77. Unruh's Nazi affiliation must have taken place at least as early as 1934 when he published his "Kolonisatorische Berührungen zwischen den Mennoniten und den Siedlern anderer Konfessionen im Weichselgebiet und in der Neumark" in the just established *Deutsches Archiv für Landes und Volksforschung*, under official Nazi government guidance from its very inception. See Michael Fahlbusch, *Wissenschaft im Dienst nationalsozialistischen Politik?* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1999): 141.
  78. In a footnote Hildebrandt added: "We have uncertain information here of a South Russian delegation of Mennonites, B. Unruh, A. Unruh, and A. Friesen. Do you know anything about it, and is it already in Holland? Can you tell us what it has accomplished? We were told that they wanted to travel to Argentina to spy out the land; later we were told that the Dutch government had offered them possibil-

ities in New Guinea. Is there any truth to these rumors?" J. J. Hildebrandt, "Ein Brief aus Sibirien an den Pastor der Mennoniten-gemeinde in Amsterdam, Holland," *MR* (27 April, 1921): 12-14. Unruh was given a copy of this letter by Dr. Kuiper, minister of the Amsterdam Doopsgezinde congregation, and the *Studienkommission* subsequently went to considerable lengths to investigate settlement possibilities in Surinam, but with negative results. See Unruh, *Die Auswanderung*: 433.

79. In the Unruh materials in the Hoover Archive, Unruh on at least several occasions asserts that he had had every intention of returning to the Ukraine after his trip to America. But because Lenin had withdrawn Russian citizenship from everyone out of the country at the time of the revolution, it had been impossible for him to do so. Only two years later had he been able to bring his family out.
80. The reason for this may well lie in the fact that the German Baptists were themselves a persecuted minority in the land. Unruh, on the other hand, absorbed a university, non-sectarian, theological education in a thoroughly Germanized setting.
81. Peter Braun to Jacob H. Janzen, 7 June, 1933: *Peter J. Braun Correspondence*.
82. B. F. Stolfuss to Levi Mumaw and Orie O. Miller, Constantinople, 15 March, 1922. "Russian Relief," IX-I-I, Mennonite Church Archives.
83. *MR* (3 May, 1922): 3-4.
84. B. H. Unruh, in his *Fügung und Führung im Mennonitischen Welthilfswerk 1920-1933* (Karlsruhe: Heinrich Schneider Verlag, 1966): 17-18, writes:  
 "The 'Consulado General de la Republica Del Paraguay' in Berlin sent the following message to B. B. Janz, Chairman of the Association of Citizens of Dutch Ancestry:  
 " 'We hereby attest that the government of the Republic of Paraguay in Asuncion, on 26 April, 1921 under "Ley 514," passed a law in which the Republic of Paraguay granted wide-ranging privileges to Mennonites should they decide to enter in large numbers.  
 "'The decree has been signed by the President and all the ministers; the government publication, which has published this law, can be found here in the General Consulate.  
 Berlin, 22 April, 1922.'

"The law granting the privileges, 'Ley 514,' granted complete freedom of religion and education (schools) as well as local self-government and exemption from military service."

- 85. McRoberts represented the company through which the Mennonites of Manitoba had purchased land in Paraguay.
- 86. Braun to A. A. Friesen, 22 March, 1922 and 27 March, 1922: MS 60-3, #17: A. A. *Friesen Papers*.
- 87. Mennonite Church Archives: *op. cit.*
- 88. There is a picture of the delegates to this meeting in B. H. Unruh's *Fügung und Führung*, p. 66 (the date is given only as "June, 1922"). In the picture are: Abraham Braun, Oberursel; Emil Haendiges (Ibersheim); Abraham Warkentin (Oberursel); Heinrich Braun ("aus Russland [from Russia]" – must just have arrived); Christian Neff (Weierhof); and Benjamin Unruh (Karlsruhe), among others.
- 89. Unruh continued: "Mr. McRoberts and Co. want to help our people, but only after wealthy patrons have signed on. They want to bring the Canadian Mennonites there first (the so-called Sommerfelders). That matter is now underway.

- Friesen writes that we cannot hope for anything there before the end of a full year. At the moment we cannot go there. But he will immediately set himself in contact with McRoberts once more. Right now Canada offers the best opportunities. Here we can accomplish things immediately; and immediate action, as we gather from your reports, is now most important. I personally am of the opinion that Paraguay will come under strong consideration for a later migration. I would personally regret very much if we were unable to settle in compact settlements as soon as a mass migration is possible . . . ." **B. B. Janz Papers**, folder 52.
90. B. H. Unruh to A. A. Friesen, 19 June, 1922. **Canadian Board of Colonization Papers**: Mennonite Heritage Centre. A. A. Friesen himself wrote Braun on 16 September, 1922: ". . . No individualistic efforts by isolated groups will be supported by either the home or American organizations. They would only disrupt things here and there. Your employers should therefore be advised that they hold to the Association – that is to its leadership . . . ." **A. A. Friesen Papers**, MS – 60.
  91. Heinrich Braun (Deutsche Mennoniten Hilfe letterhead) to the Secretariat of the **Studienkommission**, 17 June, 1922: "Russian Relief," Mennonite Church Archives. In the conclusion of the letter Braun complained about Unruh's attitude toward him, saying: "I cannot let this opportunity pass without explaining my commission. First, the exceptional authority granted me by the group in question does not imply a rejection of our **Studienkommission**, nor is the action taken by my authorizing agency a move away from the larger body and a declaration of independence; it is rather simply an attempt to make contact with foreign countries more quickly and thus get out of Russia more rapidly. Indeed, I must say that my group directed me to make contact with the Studienkommission and to work in cooperation with it. It is neither my or my employer's intention – it would be alien to our basic beliefs – to work in opposition to the **St. K.** It is much rather my and my group's desire to remain in intimate association with the larger body of the Mennonites and to work together for the welfare of the whole." But Unruh was dead against any such "interference" by H. J. Braun.
  92. **Canadian Board of Colonization Papers**, vol. 1163, XXII - A – 1: MHC.
  93. **A. A. Friesen Papers**.
  94. "Bericht über meine Studienreise in Süd-Amerika," **A. A. Friesen Papers**, Ms - 60; #99.
  95. It was not until 1927 that H. J. Braun's report appeared in print, and then under a pseudonym and in a somewhat expanded version as: Otto Xenos, "Eine Studienreise durch Uruguay und Paraguay," **Christlicher Gemeindekalender**, vol. 36 (1927): 99-128. I intend to discuss the entire "Paraguay matter" through the 1929-30 emigration in a future essay. Many years ago, while writing my doctoral dissertation in Germany during the years 1965-1967, I was offered all of my great uncle's papers relating to this Paraguayan affair. Not interested in such matters at the time, I turned down the offer. When I did become interested in them some six years ago, I discovered that finally, in accordance with my great uncle's wishes, the papers had been destroyed. For months thereafter I kicked myself for my then shortsighted stupidity. But I do believe that I have now been able to retrieve all of the originals from the archives, although at the moment, I have no idea why he published his report on his South American trip under a pseudonym. His papers might have held the answer.
  96. **H. J. Braun Nachlass**: written about 1928. Another talk was called "Leben u. Treiben deutscher Kolonisten in Russland u. ihre Erlebnisse in der Kriegs-und Revolutionsjahre." It dealt only with the Mennonites. Yet another was called: "Die Erlebnisse deutschstämmigen Kolonisten in Russland . . . ." It, too, dealt with the

Russian Mennonites. Still another was called: "Das Schulwesen unserer deutsch-evangel. Stammesbrüder in Süd-Russland." Like all the rest, it also dealt with the Russian Mennonites.

97. H. J. Braun to Hauptlehrer Gail, Biedenkopf, 10 September, 1929. **H. J. Braun Nachlass.**
98. B. H. Unruh to H. J. Braun, 24 February, 1944.
99. See especially his last letters to Jacob H. Janzen in the 1930s. On 18 April, 1932, for example, he wrote: "In two weeks we will vote once again. Then I too want to throw my vote onto the scale in order, finally, to help Hitler achieve his goal. It is very doubtful whether or not my little voice will be enough, but it is time [that Hitler achieves his goal]. Germany has to be swept clean with brooms of iron, and only Hitler is capable of doing that . . . ." In another letter of 11 May, 1932 he wrote: "The Germans have finally realized that no one will raise a finger in their defense: not England, not America or anyone else. Slowly we are beginning to realize that we must help ourselves. That is the essence and the value of the Hitler movement. But not only that: we hope and desire that they will lead our not only financially but also *morally terribly mismanaged country to an ethical renewal. Before that can happen, however, the movement must itself be cleansed and become more mature in every way.* For, there is much unruly strength in it that, like froth, bubbles uselessly to the surface. This must be controlled and directed onto correct paths in order to produce good; 'Will Hitler be able to do this?' That is the anxious question that concerns many people."

By 1933, however, he had progressed beyond the democratic process, writing Janzen: "At the moment we stand on the eve of elections, but these will be the last elections for some time no matter what the outcome. Should Hitler not get a majority he will just bring on a dictatorship; for he will sooner die than give up his goal. And his goal is a free, strong, morally cleansed Germany. So, let us hope!"

Even here, however, although Braun had his doubts about Hitler and his movement, his disgust with Weimar chaos and what appeared to him to be its moral corruption, was enough to cause him to welcome a Hitler dictatorship. What therefore led him astray in the last years of his life to place an ever increasing trust in Hitler despite his earlier misgivings was his belief – acquired in the critical years from 1914 to 1924 – in *das Deutschtum*. This comes out clearly in another letter to Janzen written on 6 July, 1933, just a few months before Braun's death. There he wrote: "There have been no immigration laws in Germany to the present; as consequence, the light shunning riff raff has entered the country in droves from the East, threatening to destroy the German state. But the familiar German Michel has finally been raised from his slumber and, although not slamming his fist upon the table – no, not that! – has said solemnly but with force and determination: Now, there is an end to it! *We have no need of the un-German spirit, nor do we want him! We wish to remain German!* We wish once again to be honest, clean, and faithful! You may no longer poison our people in your newspapers and books, in theaters and films. That is how one must interpret the battle, and that is how one should understand it in foreign countries . . . ."

And in his last letter of 4 September, 1933 to Janzen Braun wrote: ". . . What has happened here in Germany has nothing to do with it [a revolution]. It is – how shall one put it – a national uprising, the awakening as in springtime of an entire nation, an internal renewal and rebirth! It is a holiday and the people have been gripped by a holy enthusiasm! I would like, my friends . . . , " and he proceeded to describe recent political events of Hitler's coming to power. In doing so, he categorically rejected all the "foreign propaganda" about Hitler and con-



cluded a lengthy, eight-page letter with:

"Do we now have a dictatorship? No, we do **not** have a dictatorship. For: a dictatorship rests on **force**; Hitler's position, in contrast, rests on **trust**, (that of the people and of the President of the Reich). Nominally we still have a republic, but it is filled with a monarchical spirit. I believe it is only a matter of time for a monarchy to return.

"Let me finally conclude. You are probably asking: What essentially is National Socialism? Let me explain the movement briefly to you in terms of its most essential, decisive, and salient characteristics. These are:

"(1) an unshakable, ineradicable **faith in Germany**, the German people, in all that which is good and noble in this people, and

"(2) an inflexible, iron **discipline and blind obedience** to the Fuehrer.

"Heil Hitler"

How wrong could a man be? One wonders what Braun would have said had he lived to see and experience the evil of Hitler and the third Reich.

100. See H. J. Braun to Mariechen [appears to have been a niece in Russia], 23 June, 1930, where he wrote: "Uncle Jacob's son, Peter, passed through here not too long ago on his way to Brazil. But I did not see him." **H. J. Braun Nachlass**.
101. See also Frank H. Epp, **Germanism and National Socialism**: 107, where the author writes: "In this search the first barrier to be overcome was the fact that the Mennonite people under discussion had actually in large part originated in what was known as Holland or the Netherlands. This could not be and was not denied. It was pointed out, however, that the Netherlands when properly considered consisted of several parts. This sectionalization was then used to support the pro-German argument. In this instance it needed to be proved that the Mennonites, though from the Netherlands, were nonetheless Germanic in their racial constitution." And Epp cites B. H. Unruh's "Zur wissenschaftlichen Klärung der Herkunft des Russland-Mennonitentums," **Der Bote**, XV (1 June, 1938): 1-2. It is interesting to note that throughout his **Die Auswanderung**, written – as the internal evidence indicates – during the early war years (1941-1943), that is, about the time when the Nazis appeared to be moving toward victory on all fronts, that Unruh never speaks of a "niederländisch-niederdeutsch" origin of the Russian Mennonites – as he was to do later after the defeat of the Nazis – but only of a "niederdeutsch" origin throughout the over 500 page manuscript. Had it not been lost, he would most assuredly have made a number of "corrections" in it before publishing it after the war. From a passage in Fahlbusch, **Wissenschaft**: 619, it would appear that Benjamin Unruh was an official member of the Nazi sponsored **Ostforschung** group under whose auspices **Die Auswanderung** was to be published.
102. Quoted in John D. Thiesen, **Mennonite and Nazi?**: 86-87. Mennonites, even B. H. Unruh, "the historian of church and dogma" as he styled himself in 1944, had learned nothing from their years of experience with absolute rulers who "could be cruel with impunity." More depressing, however, is the fact that this most learned of Mennonite theologians, unlike a Dietrich Bonhoeffer or a Karl Barth for the Lutherans and Reformed respectively – the former even to the extent of becoming Anabaptist as his **Cost of Discipleship** clearly demonstrates – did not recognize what Hitler was all about and continued to work with the Nazi government to the bitter end. At the very least, he should – as a Christian – have rejected Nazi anti-Semitism. Braun died before he could see the results that followed in the wake of National Socialism; but what excuse did B. H. Unruh have for his support and his utter silence on the matter later?

Contrast this with the article carried in the **Basler Nachrichten** regarding

- Eberhard Arnold's Rhönbruderhof's expulsion from Germany by the Nazis in 1937: "These people say that they were expelled because – in accordance with their *convictions* – they did not want to perform *military service*. Also, they have *consistently refused* to employ the *Hitler greeting* . . . ." Quoted in James Irvin Lichti, "Religious Identity vs. 'Aryan' Identity: German Mennonites and Hutterites under the Third Reich," MA thesis, San Francisco State University, 1989. It is ironic that Unruh, the Russian/German Mennonite, felt compelled to distance himself and the German Mennonites from these newcomers to Anabaptism who were more faithful to Anabaptist principles than he was. See Lichti, "Die Stellungnahme deutscher Mennoniten zur Auflösung des Rhönbruderhofs in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus," *MBI* (1992): 73-91.
103. B. H. Unruh to SS Obergruppenführer Lorenz, 21 September, 1942: MBStC&A.
  104. K. Lindemann, *Liquidation of Landownership*: 63.
  105. Quoted in Unruh, *Die Auswanderung*: 406. Had Unruh disagreed with this position, and had he not been writing in 1941-43, he would at least have been tempted to remove the passage. But he did not.
  106. See note #98 of this chapter.
  107. C. M. ten Cate, "Das Los unserer Russischen Brüder in holländischer Beleuchtung," *MBI*, #4 (April, 1916): 27.
  108. This letter is in the possession of Irmgard Braun-Hörner.
  109. Unruh himself was at the center of these negotiations. It seems almost incongruous that they should have done so.
  110. MLA
  111. MLA
  112. Jacob Warkentin, "Benjamin Heinrich Unruh: Teacher, Scholar, Statesman 1881-1959," *Shepherds, Servants and Prophets*: 401-425, writes: "When the Ukraine was occupied by the German forces as part of the Russian offensive, Unruh traveled there for the German government ministry concerned with the occupied eastern lands, and in 1943 spoke with Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler about the possibility of resettling the Russian Germans in the Ukraine. Himmler was very impressed by the Ukrainian Mennonites and in a letter considered the idea of settling the Mennonites and the Jehovah's Witnesses, because of their pacifism, in a buffer zone behind the 'Eastern defense border,' so that they could serve as agents of pacification of the Russian people. In Paraguay, Unruh's trip to the Ukraine raised new hopes, and many began to dream of sowing wheat once again," p. 418. Hitler saw himself as predestined by Providence for the task of destroying communism. See Ian Kershaw, *Hitler*, vol. II: 15.
  113. Hitler certainly saw himself ordained by "providence" for the same purpose. See especially Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1936-1945: Nemesis* (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company: 2000): xlv, 233-235, 400-407, and numerous other passages. Did Unruh arrive at his conviction that Hitler's "mission" was to conquer the Ukraine on his own, or did he accept Hitler's own repeated declarations to that effect? Did it not matter to him that this was to be accomplished at enormous cost of human life, he who had himself in 1917 made such an eloquent defense of non-resistance? How could such a man, the most learned of theologians amongst the Russian Mennonites, have so mistaken the ways of Providence? He should have listened to the ordinary person in Stuttgart, who is reported to have said in 1944: "It's always claimed that the Fuehrer has been sent to us from God, though not in order to save Germany, but to ruin it. Providence has determined the destruction of the German people, and Hitler is the executor of this will." *Ibid*: 685.
- Perhaps Unruh was misled by the response of many German Lutherans to

Hitler who regarded him as one of Luther's *Wundermänner* – men whom God had chosen to fulfill some special task on earth. Such men, Luther asserted, were exempt from the normal social, political and even moral constraints placed upon ordinary rulers. Lutheran officials repeatedly referred to Hitler as precisely such a *Wundermann* sent from God. For example, on the occasion of Hitler's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, the following account appeared in a Lutheran church paper: "The German Evangelical Church, together with the entire German *Volk*, on 20 April [1939] celebrated the Führer's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday with exuberant joy. In him God has given the German *Volk* a true *Wundermann*, as Martin Luther called the great ones, men whom God sends into the world every now and then in accordance with his counsel and will, in order that they may affect history in mighty ways, in order to point their *Volk* and the world in new directions, blazing new trails into a living future that will conjure up a new age." What a prophecy.

## CHAPTER 14

1. Bergmann probably came to Germany in 1907. See "Bergmann, Cornelius," *ME*, I: 279-280.
2. In the *C. Henry Smith Collection*. I am grateful to Librarian Anne Hilthy for providing me with a copy. Bergmann wrote to Smith on the recommendation of B. H. Unruh, who wrote in his *Die Auswanderung*: "Bergmann has investigated the migration of the Mennonites from the region of the Netherlands [*niederländischen* as opposed to the *niederdeutschen Raum*] to West Prussia on the basis of archival documents. He would very much like to publish his findings. He had intended to do so earlier but the project collapsed due to the *nervus rerum* [the events of WWI]. I commended him to the Bluffton College historian. Perhaps Professor Smith could be of help . . .," p. 463. But "Professor Smith" apparently did not do anything in spite of the fact that A. A. Friesen and others became involved.
3. H. G. Mannhardt, *Die Danziger Mennonitengemeinde: Ihre Entstehung und ihre Geschichte von 1569-1919* (Danzig: Selbstverlag der Danziger Mennonitengemeinde, 1919): 38: note. Already in his 1915 "Die Lage der Mennoniten in Russland," *MBI*, # 2 (February, 1915): 11 – that is, as we now know from his 1922 letter to Smith, after having virtually completed his research on the origin of the Prussian Mennonites – Bergmann wrote: ". . . but because they [the Prussian Mennonites] from time immemorial, ever since their migration from Holland and Friesland . . ."
4. *Ibid*: 37, 39, 40 (Niederländer), 41 (Holländer), 42, 44, 45, 50, 51, 52. H. G. Mannhardt, "Danziger Mennoniten-Gemeinde," *ML*, I: 301-305. In the latter he speaks of "holländische Flüchtlinge" (Dutch refugees), that they remained in constant contact with their home churches, spoke Dutch in their homes and churches until about 1750, and had many of their children educated in the Netherlands, especially Amsterdam.
5. Johannes van der Smissen, "Ueber die ersten Anfänge der Mennoniten in Preussen," *MBI* (July, 1854): 29-33, p. 30. In his first mention of Anabaptists, Hartknoch argued that "The Anabaptists came here from Liegnitz, a city in Silesia," and the Reformed and Sacramentarians "came from Holland and the other Netherlands," p. 284. But in his description of the Anabaptist teaching, which arrived, he said, in 1531, it is quite clear that he is talking not of Anabaptists but of Mystics or radicals like Schwenckfeld, Carlstadt and Cellarius. There is much

talk of the "inner Word," of the "baptism of the Holy Spirit," but nothing about rebaptism or adult baptism. See especially pp. 284-286. Only when he comes to the year 1559 and the city of Königsberg does Hartknoch describe true Anabaptists (pp. 403, 491), giving their confession of faith (pp. 497-498) and stating explicitly: "Above all they speak mockingly and derogatorily of the holy sacrament of infant baptism and hold it in derision . . ." But only when he came to treat of the city of Danzig did Hartknoch touch on the national origin of these religious dissenters, saying: "After Alvarez, Duke of Alva, had wrecked havoc in the Netherlands, mercilessly persecuting the Reformed in the process, did many Netherlands, partially out of fear and partially for other reasons, leave the country for other regions and thus also came to Prussia." Among these refugees were the Anabaptists (pp. 717-718). Eventually, Hartknoch also came to speak of "Mennisten," depicting their division into what he called the "Bekümmerten" (Flemish) and "Klarcken" (Frisians), and listing their origin from Menno Simons in Frisia (pp. 856-859). These latter terms are identical to the ones used by a group of Moravian Hutterite missionaries that encountered Dutch "Monisten" in the vicinity of Elbing in 1603. See L. Neubaur, "Mährische Brüder in Elbing," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, XXXIII (1912): 447-455.

6. W. Mannhardt, *Die Wehrfreiheit*: 66.
7. Anna Brons, *Ursprung, Entwicklung und Schicksale der Taufgesinnten oder Mennoniten* (Norden: Diedrich Soltau, 1884): 243, 246; and Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*: 42-46.
8. Friesen does not appear to have intended the reference to be to the Moravian Hutterites, who did appeal to Albrecht of Brandenburg for permission to enter his lands in 1535, and who, in 1603 sent a missionary expedition to Prussia and followed this up in 1604 with a second attempt to settle there. See the following: Paul Tschackert, hrsg., *Urkundenbuch zur Reformationgeschichte des Herzogthums Preussen*, reprint of the 1890 edition (Osnabrueck: Otto Zeller, 1965): 314-315; and L. Neubaur, "Mährische Brüder in Elbing," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, vol. XXXIII (1912): 447-455.
9. Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*: 43. Compare with Peter Braun's virtually identical list!
10. *Ibid*: 45-46.
11. See especially "Ein Abschnitt aus der Gnadenfelder Gemeindechronik," *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch* (Berdiansk: H. Ediger, 1908): 52-65; and (1910): 106-115, especially pp. 108-111.
12. Enkhuizen: P. Bas, 1913.
13. *Ibid*: 19-38.
14. *Ibid*: 231-251.
15. H. H. Schroeder, *Russlanddeutsche Friesen*: 3: note.
16. M. Wilkens: Emden, 1921.
17. *Ibid*: 3, the book was written while in Sweden.
18. *Ibid*: 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 23, 28, 30, 59, 67, 73, and 76.
19. Dirk Gora, *Russian Dance of Death* (Claremont, CA: The Key Book Publishers, 1930).
20. *Ibid*: 3, 4, 5, 21, 44, 54, and 57.
21. *Ibid*: 9.
22. *Ibid*: 10.
23. *Ibid*: 21.
24. *Ibid*: 44.
25. C. Henry Smith, *The Coming of the Russian Mennonites: An Episode in the Set-*

*ling of the Last Frontier 1874-1884* (Berne, IN: Mennonite Book Concern, 1927). Long before Smith, C. H. Wedel had already written of the Prussian Mennonites: "The internal organization of the congregations was established overwhelmingly on the basis of the arrangements brought along from Holland. Many congregations, like the one in Danzig, continued to maintain a lively exchange with their Dutch fellow believers. The use of the Dutch language was retained in the church services in all congregations until 1750. Indeed, as late as 1788 the baptismal ceremony was still conducted in the Dutch language." *Geschichte der Mennoniten*, vol. III, *Die Geschichte der niederländischen, preussischen und russischen Mennoniten* (Newton, KS: Bethel College, 1901): 80. See also pp. 83, 88, 89, and 92.

26. *Ibid.*: 11.

27. *Ibid.*: 17-18. When I first discovered that Unruh had encouraged Cornelius Bergmann to write C. Henry Smith about his work, I thought that it might have been for the sake of finding a publisher for his manuscript. But there was as yet no manuscript, as Bergmann's letter to Smith makes clear. And the above letter appears to be the only one from Bergmann to Smith in the Bluffton College Library. What happened to Bergmann's notes, collected during some four years of archival research? Was Smith a recipient of them? It appears not. Nor does Smith give any indication where he derived his information regarding the interpretation on the origins of the Prussian Mennonites presented in the first chapter of his book. There are virtually no footnotes in the entire book, not even a bibliography. Hence there is no way to hold Smith accountable for his views.

28. Mennonites came generally to be regarded as "kulaks" by the Soviets. See the extended description in Otto Auhagen, *Die Schicksalswende des Russland-deutschen Bauerntums in den Jahren 1927-1930* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1942): 1-49.

29. B. H. Unruh, in a letter to Peter Braun of 18 June 1929, speaks of 74 families while Auhagen speaks of some 60. Unruh would probably have had a better handle on the numbers since he had to deal with these refugees from the German side. Among these 74 families, apparently (and I had not known this), were my mother's parents and their children, for Unruh wrote, "In the meantime Abraham [Braun] was here, and as a result I have gained greater clarity in the matter. Your relatives, on the advice of the CMB of Col. [Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization], have turned to you in order to get permission to enter the country. But that is something totally different than if an organization officially takes this matter in hand . . . ." *Peter J. Braun Correspondence*. That Unruh was indeed talking about my grandparents is made explicit in his statement: "I have now been informed that Abraham's sister-in-law (or sister??) has an eye disease . . . ." My grandmother had indeed had trachoma and the family was denied entry to Canada because of the scars that remained.

And in a letter to Braun of 29 October, 1929 Unruh wrote: "I received further information about conditions pertaining in Slavgorod from the group out of Moscow that came over Southampton. These families, to which your relatives belong, had been granted permission to leave after intensive petitioning and with the support of Smidovitsch; but they were told in no uncertain terms that, under no circumstances, would any other groups be permitted to leave in the next few years. In the meantime, however, other families are again arriving in Moscow . . . ."

30. A report by "Brother Daniel Heide, Bishop of the Mennonite Brethren Churches in Siberia:" in the *H. J. Braun Nachlass*.

31. My grandfather, who with his family was one of the 70, wrote about their experiences in his brief autobiography: "The year 1929 was more of a quiet year. The

harvest was fairly good, and we really thought that the government had become more considerate. But in this regard we were deceived; it imposed taxes it had promised to forego in the spring. In this way the farmers would seed more!

"Our children in America [my parents] had sent us traveling passes; so we began to work with this, but in our area we ran into difficulty. The pastor's role became more difficult. Pastors were depicted on billboards as derogatory elements of society, and this naturally left us with feelings of fear, and we wished ourselves out of the country.

"In the spring of 1929 a number of families went to Moscow, to negotiate at that end, and try to emigrate. Selling became difficult, since so many were selling, so we tried to sell discreetly what we could, cast our care on the Lord, and on 6 April, 1929, we went to Moscow. We left our youngest son behind with the eye doctor. We took the necessary papers from the church. Arriving in Moscow, we immediately applied to emigrate. I brought mother to a specialist, and went back [to Siberia] again. To try to sell the property now was unthinkable; it was the beginning of May. I took our son Abram and returned to Moscow. Just before Pentecost we received the good news that passes were on the way. But our joy was shortlived. Twenty-four families were excluded with the comment, 'After the holidays you will get your passes, the rest can go now.' On the appointed day we appeared, but instead of passes we were denied, saying that no more passes would be allowed in 1929. This was an official government statement. This was a hard blow. We tried again and were refused again. I asked, 'What are we to do now?' They said to return and work in the commune. To tell them I was a pastor and wouldn't have access to work in a commune was unthinkable! All we could do was pray and seek the face of God as a group. For two weeks we prayed, and then applied again, through the postal service. And Praise the Lord, finally God moved upon the authorities to grant us visas, and August 31, we left Moscow via Leningrad, and September, 14 we arrived in Hamburg in good condition in the immigration center. To God be the glory for His deliverance from the land of destruction!" The original German is in my possession. Translation prepared by Jake Friesen, Vernon, B.C.

32. Auhagen, *Schicksalswende*. The story is given in exquisite detail largely from self-generated documents of the time.
33. *Ibid*: 60.
34. Unruh wrote to Braun on 9 March, 1931: "The German colonists, especially the Mennonites, today have the best of reputations in counter revolutionary circles. Under no circumstances, therefore, may we once again, so shortly before a solution to the catastrophe has been reached, ruin everything through imprudent publications . . ." Was Unruh chiding his friend for his *Kto takie Mennonity? Peter J. Braun Correspondence*. For an excellent description of the diplomatic ramifications of this event between Germany and Russia, see Harvey Leonard Dyck, *Weimar Germany and Soviet Russia 1926-1933. A Study in Diplomatic Instability* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966): 152-208. However, no one to my knowledge has looked at the precise nature of the newspaper coverage, though Dyck does some of this.
35. B. H. Unruh, "The Background and Causes of the Flight of the Mennonites from Russia in 1929," *MQR*, IV (October, 1930): 274.
36. On 12 June, 1929 Unruh wrote Braun: ". . . The report will make very clear to you that Berlin condemns this flight of the colonists in absolute terms . . ." As late as 29 October, 1929 he wrote: "I was in Berlin before I left for England and spoke to the Foreign Office about events transpiring in Moscow. They emphasized that

nothing could be done in the matter." *Peter J. Braun Correspondence*.

At the first meeting of the Mueller Cabinet on the issue where Dr. Curtius, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on 8 - 11 - 1929, made the recommendation to contribute some three million marks to aid the refugees, a counter-recommendation was made in effect to reject that of the minister and "merely provide monies for their return to Siberia." *Akten der Reichskanzlei Weimarer Republik*, vol. II, *Das Kabinett Mueller II*, ed, Martin Vogt (Boppard a/Rh.: Harald Boldt Verlag, 1970): 1131.

37. Was this organization a part of Burleigh's emerging *Ostforschung* community?
38. B. H. Unruh to Peter J. Braun, 29 October, 1929. *Peter J. Braun Correspondence*. This must have coincided with the first press releases on the Moscow tragedy.
39. The League of Nations did become involved, but only in an advisory capacity.
40. Minutes of the cabinet meeting of 9 November, 1929: *Reichskanzle Akten*, pp. 1131-1132.
41. *Ibid*: 1144-1145.
42. *Ibid*: 1158.
43. *Ibid*, Document # 452, note 3, pp. 1479-1480.
44. Aside from the German Red Cross, the *Zentralausschuss für Innere Mission*, the *Deutscher Karitasverband*, the *5. Wohlfahrtsverband*, the *Hauptausschuss für Arbeiterwohlfahrt*, the *Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle der Christlichen Arbeiterschaft*, as well as the *Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle der Deutschen Juden*, all became involved.
45. *MBI*, vol. 76, #12 (December, 1929): 1. Though in the government documents these refugees are consistently referred to as "Mennonites," here they are referred to only as Germans living abroad. There can be little doubt that the proclamation was written by Benjamin H. Unruh.
46. The *MBI* reprinted many of these reports in its late 1929 and 1930 editions.
47. The horrendous consequences suffered by the nearly 8,000 refugees who were turned back from Moscow beginning in late 1929 early 1930 seems to have been largely forgotten in the aftermath of the success of those who had escaped. But to get some sense of what happened to the former, see the letters in Auhagen, *Schicksalswende*: 142-193; C. C. Peters, *Vor den Toren Moskaus*; and Bishop Heide's *Bericht*. Not everyone forgot, however, for Peter Braun wrote to J. H. Janzen on 7 January, 1930: "... In the final analysis the numbers do not add up, for at least some 6,000 came to Germany. But then perhaps more than 13,000 were outside the gates of Moscow, some even say as many as 14 to 15,000. I concluded a different essay to a secular newspaper with the following words: 'Along with the joy over their own deliverance (of those who were lucky enough to get out) there is mixed in the profound sadness for the many fellow sufferers who have been sent back to the bleak snow fields of Siberia, where they will find neither bread nor shelter, and where only distress and despair await them. Many of these unfortunate people may well have lost faith in humanity and a benevolent Providence! Many may also have had their heart broken by this human cruelty.'" *Peter J. Braun Correspondence*.
48. Report in the *MBI*, vol. 77, #10 (October, 1930): 110.
49. J. H. Janzen to Peter J. Braun, 14 March, 1930: *Peter J. Braun Correspondence*.
50. *Ibid*.
51. See the extensive quotations of Unruh's letters to them during the years 1930-1936 in Thiesen, *Mennonite & Nazi?* 47-104. Unruh's actions in this regard and in his later reinterpretation of Prussian Mennonite history demonstrates a fundamental disconnect in his thinking. On the one hand he tried to integrate Mennonites as much as possible into *das Deutschtum* and the German *Volk*, but on the

- other he kept on advocating the "Mennonite Ideal" of isolated Mennonite settlements, especially in Paraguay and Brazil. But perhaps this "Mennonite Ideal" was to apply only in non-Germanic countries. For those settling in Paraguay and Brazil, Unruh seems to have emphasized both aspects.
52. Even Michael Burleigh, *Germany Turns Eastward*: 34, speaks of the "plight of *German* peasants who had decamped from Siberia to the capital, in the vain expectation of being granted permission to emigrate."
  53. *Bote*, XI (12 September, 1934): 2-3.
  54. Schroeder, *Russlanddeutsche Friesen*: 1.
  55. This is clearly also Hitler's position in his *Mein Kampf*.
  56. *MR* (5 December, 1934): 1.
  57. *Ibid.*
  58. See the description in the manuscript: "Die Wehrlosigkeit der Mennoniten in Russland nach dem ersten Weltkrieg." *B. B. Janz Papers*.
  59. "Kommt Menno Simons unter den Nationalsozialisten?" *MR*, 57, #52 (26 December, 1934): 3.
  60. "Menno Simons hat das Wort," *Bote* (2 January, 1935): 1.
  61. *MBL*, #4 (April, 1916): 27.
  62. See Hans-Juergen Goertz, "Nationale Erhebung und religiöser Niedergang. Missglückte Aneignung des täuferischen Leitbildes im Dritten Reich," in: *Umstrittenes Täuferium, 1525-1975: Neue Forschungen*, H-J Goertz, hrsg. (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975): 267-268.
  63. *Ibid*: 268.
  64. *Ibid*: 276-280.
  65. P. J. Braun, "Geischtspunkte für die Sammlung und Sichtung des in unseren Dörfern vorhandenen historischen Materials," in B. H. Unruh, *Die Auswanderung*.
  66. B. H. Unruh, "Die Wehrlosigkeit. Vortrag gehalten auf der Allgemeinen Mennonitischen Konferenz am 7. Juni 1917," *MR* (July 7, 1926): 11; (July 21, 1926): 13; (July 28, 1926): 12. By 1937, however, Unruh had changed his mind – probably as early as 1918. In an essay of 1937 in *Der Bote* entitled "Randglossen," he remarked: "Tertullian knew no other banners than the banners of Christ and the devil. He interpreted Christ's disarming of Peter as meaning that Christ had taken every soldier's sword away. No Christian may be a soldier; no soldier who has become a Christian may remain in the army.  
 "The same Tertullian knows perfectly well that his interpretation is not shared by the majority of soldiers. [Not the world's most persuasive argument! One would not expect 'Christian' soldiers to share Tertullian's views, otherwise they would have to be considered obvious hypocrites.] He continually attacks the opposing views held by Christians of his day.  
 "Tertullian's writings therefore contain the proof for two things: there are many Christians in the army. He opposes the soldier's profession, but his views are not shared by the majority. And that long before Constantine . . .," p. 2.
  67. John B. Toews, *Selected Documents*: 401-402.
  68. Letter in the possession of Irmgard Braun-Hörner: Ibersheim.
  69. In the anonymous "Unsere grosse Vaterlandsliebe u. Treue zum Kaisertrone erhält einen Schlag u. wird schwer geprüft," we read: "There appeared an article in the *Friedensstimme* by B. H. U: 'Was Jacob Non-resistant?' Answer: No, he divided his herd into two flocks. Should Esau kill the one, the other could still escape."
  70. John B. Toews, *Selected Documents*: 409.
  71. This principle, by the way, is not a "Mennonite distinctive." Anyone who knows anything about Medieval Monasticism knows that it is enshrined in virtually all of



the "Monastic Rules," first and foremost the sixth-century Benedictine Rule, as a fundamental principle of "ideal Christianity" which new monastic orders sought to recreate. See my "Anabaptism and Monasticism."

I was intrigued to read, just a few days ago in David Ewert's brief biography of John A. Toews that the latter held the same view. Ewert writes: "... He did not really like to hear of the Anabaptist-Mennonite 'distinctives' because that sounded as if they were 'add-ons' to the gospel. He insisted that these so-called 'distinctives' (such as non-resistance) were embedded in the teachings of Jesus and the apostles." *Honor Such People* (Winnipeg: Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 1997): 79.

72. John B. Toews, *Selected Documents*: 301-302.
73. *Ibid*: 303. One should note that Braun does not speak of the destruction of their Christian faith, but of their *Volkstum*.
74. On the pro-Nazi sentiment among those Russian Mennonites who migrated to Canada, see Frank H. Epp, "An Analysis of Germanism and National Socialism in the Immigrant Newspaper of a Canadian Minority Group, the Mennonites, in the 1930s," unpublished Ph. D. dissertation at the University of Minnesota, 1965. It is interesting to note that by far the greatest number of pro-Nazi articles, that appeared in *Der Bote* during these years, were written by former Russian Mennonites now living in Germany, such as B. H. Unruh, Walter Quiring and H. H. Schroeder, among others.
75. John Friesen, "The Relationship of Prussian Mennonites to German Nationalism," in: Harry Loewen, ed., *Mennonite Images* (Winnipeg: Hyperion Press, 1980): 61-72, makes very much the same case for the Prussian Mennonites. He states his thesis as follows: "What I wish to probe in this paper is why the Prussian Mennonites' critical capacities in relation to the nation practically collapsed during the era of National Socialism. My thesis is that this critical capacity was sacrificed when Mennonites decided to accept military service in the era immediately preceding and following the Franco-Prussian War. Acceptance of military service represented a basic reorientation of values. This reorientation greatly reduced their capacity to take a critical stance toward actions or aims of the state and left little possibility for the community as such to mount any significant opposition to National Socialism," p. 61.
76. Poland became the primary object of the Nazi politically guided *Ostforschung* according to Burleigh, *Germany Turns Eastward*.
77. Rolf Fieguth, "Mennonitisches Geschichtsbewusstsein und die alte westpreussische Heimat," *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch* (1971): 50-54, traces this development as a West Prussian insider. He writes concerning the impact of these events on their interpretation of Poland:

"Because of this a transformation of its [Polish] history and Mennonite self-consciousness could not be avoided. Mennonite history is no longer viewed from the perspective of a tenacious adherence to Anabaptist articles of faith, with emigration the natural consequence of the actions of intolerant regimes; *now this history is seen much more from the vantage point of the retention and propagation of das Deutschtum, especially in the colonization of the East* [my emphasis]. In an odd kind of historical myth-making, the Mennonites with their civilizing prowess are now transformed into the heirs of the Teutonic Knights destroyed by the Poles in 1466. That West Prussia was once, indeed to the end of the eighteenth century, Polish Prussia is suppressed to such an extent that any reminder of it provokes the present-day 'standard Mennonite consumer.' It nevertheless remains true that, aside from the fact that the Mennonites encountered a linguisti-

cally related people there, the relatively tolerant laxity of the Polish state in confessional matters played an important role in the settlement of **Dutch** Anabaptists in sixteenth-century Polish Prussia. But this factor has absolutely no impact upon the overwhelmingly negative West Prussian Mennonite picture of Poland. Under such circumstances there can be no talk of any historical 'gratitude' toward the Old Polish Noble Republic, such as was later richly extended to the German government of Prussia and, as in the case of the Russian Mennonites, was extended to the Russian Tsars. On the contrary, the later violent annexations of Polish territories by Prussia between 1772 and 1795 are praised by the Mennonites as liberation; that arbitrary actions against, and harassment of, Mennonites derived every bit as much from surrounding Germans as from the governing Polish bureaucrats and ecclesiastical leaders is not directly concealed but it is explained away and the importance of the privileges granted the Mennonites by the Polish kings trivialized. The theme of the actual relationship between Mennonites and Poles up to the violent liquidation of the Polish State at the hand of the two major German powers Austria and Germany, and by Russia, is inadequately treated; in any case, in the later and current Mennonite consciousness it is the prevailing belief that there has always been – already during the Polish period – a Polish-Mennonite opposition.

"For our historical reorientation it seems to me necessary that our sorely-trying fellowship rethink many aspects especially of this relationship. The war against Poland which Germany so unnecessarily unleashed in 1939, the subsequent annexation of extensive West and Central Polish regions by the **Reich** (and East Poland by Russia), the expulsion of many hundreds of thousands of Poles from these their homelands and the harassment of the rest, the millions of Poles murdered in the General Government along with the nearly total extermination of the Eastern Jews even after the essential warfare had ended, the systematic and massive destruction of the evidence of Polish culture at the instigation of so-called German art experts: all these atrocities persuaded the victors in the war to compensate the Polish nation territorially, a compensation that brought great suffering upon the West Prussian Mennonites and their fellow East German countrymen . . . ,” pp. 53-54. Even though Fieguth does not mention his name, the interpretation of Polish history described in the above analysis could easily be said to be Unruh’s interpretation. It is not the interpretation of the other Russian Mennonites, however, at least not during World War I. Fieguth does not relate this Mennonite historiography to the larger field of Germanic *Ostforschung* during these years.

78. This statement has now to be read in the light of Michael Burleigh’s *Germany Turns Eastward* and Michael Fahlbusch’s *Wissenschaften*. From the latter it becomes clear that Unruh participated fully in the Nazi-guided scholarship.
79. B. H. Unruh, “Vorfragen zur wissenschaftlichen Klärung der Herkunft des russland-deutschen Mennonitentums,” *MR* (29 May, 1935): 2; published nearly simultaneously in *Der Bote*.
80. # 2, *MR* (5 June, 1935): 1.
81. *Ibid.*
82. # 4 *MR* (19 June, 1935): 5.
83. Surely, Unruh was aware of the divide on this issue between German and Dutch scholars. Had he not himself arbitrarily modified Hylkema’s statement on the problem in the German translation of the latter’s Dutch text? # 6, *Bote* (25 Nov. 1936): 1.
84. Already in 1928 a West Prussian Mennonite named Heinrich Wiehler could write in the *MBI*, vol. 75 (September, 1928), # 9: 81-83: “Mennonites are now spread

throughout the entire world and wherever they have settled they have known how to retain their Germanic essence by means of the German language, German customs and usages. They were born in Switzerland and the Kingdom of Holland some 400 years ago; but because of their strict faith they were expelled with many of them finding sanctuary in German lands. Here small congregations quickly grew into large ones, most of which have been maintained to this day, so that one may say: *the German lands are the Fatherland of the Mennonites*.

"In most Mennonite congregations marriage with members of other confessional groups was forbidden. That is the reason why *Mennonite marriages here in West Prussia, until about 50 years ago, had remained thoroughly Dutch. The Dutch, however, are a purely Germanic race; it is for this reason that one can still recognize the pure German in many-a Mennonite*" [my emphasis].

85. Mennonite contemporaries in North America were fairly quick to accuse B. H. Unruh of political bias. He answered the charges in # 10 of his "Praktische Fragen" in *Der Bote* of 10 November, 1937. There he stated: "I find myself compelled to ward off a certain misinterpretation of my statements.

"I achieved my views about the Russian German Mennonites long before the World War and long before 1933. It does not become my brothers to interpret, and misinterpret, the explanations of a blameless representative of the Mennonite congregations and their concerns, and honest scholar, through the eyes of contemporary politics . . .," p. 1. Unruh's argument of authority without concrete proof to the contrary was not convincing, however.

Interestingly, in order to deflect the charge of Nazi bias, Unruh had to assert that he had arrived at his views even before World War I, therefore his and Germany's political context was irrelevant. But if this was indeed the case, then all of his current research was merely dedicated to confirming a position he had arrived at much earlier and not the result of the vaunted scholarly research he was so rigorously involved in. In either case, Unruh's scholarship was highly suspect.

86. It is interesting to note that some sixty-three years after Peter Braun wrote his *Who are the Mennonites?* A Russian scholar by the name of A. N. Ipatov wrote his own *Kto takie Mennonity?* It was immediately translated into German and published as, *Wer sind die Mennoniten?* (Alma-Ata: Verlag Kasachstan, 1977). A Marxist sociological study, the author (already in the preface) argued for the Dutch origin of the Russian Mennonites and their separation/distinction from the Baptists. And his first citation in Chapter I was from Peter Braun's book by the same title.

Ipatov was fully aware that Peter Braun was the author of the anonymous 1914/1915 *Who are the Mennonites* with its argument of the Dutch origins of the Prussian/Russian Mennonites. He was equally aware that B. H. Unruh was the originator and principal architect of the opposing view, stating: ". . . In a polemic against his fellow believer P. J. Braun, who had asserted that the Mennonites were not of German but of Dutch ancestry, Unruh sought to prove his principal contention that the Mennonites had always been Germans by referring back to the early migrations of the Franks, Saxons and other Germanic tribes which had formed the ethnic origin of the German people. Horst Penner made the same assertion as late as 1940. On the same basis the Hitler fascists tried to convince the Dutch during World War II that they were really German. And after the annexation of Austria the Nazis also held the former to be Germans," p. 22. In the above debate, Ipatov came down solidly on the side of Peter Braun, rejecting even the, at the time, Russian government's (as well as Pisarevsky's and Bondar's) arguments that "in 200 years the Mennonites had been thoroughly

assimilated by the surrounding German population, whose culture, way of life, traditions, and Low German language they had adopted. For these reasons all the Mennonites who later migrated to Russia had been Germans," pp. 20-21.

Thereupon Ipatov attacked Unruh's position, stating: "It is also anti-historical to argue the thesis adopted in bourgeois historiography that the original ancestors of the Mennonites were Germans.

"Mennonite nationalistic historiography of the kind practiced by B. H. Unruh sought to prove the thesis of the Germanic descent of the Mennonites in the following manner: B. H. Unruh sought to prove the German descent of the Mennonites by arguing, first, that Menno Simons had founded his church in East Friesland, which, at the time had been a part of 'Greater Germany' and had never belonged to the Netherlands. Secondly, a significant portion of the Dutch Anabaptists, out of whom the Mennonite proselytes came, had been refugees from Switzerland and Germany. Thirdly, according to Unruh the Mennonites spoke German from the very beginning since, at the time, there were no significant differences between the Frisian language and that of the Low Countries; therefore it would be senseless to assert that the Mennonites were not German," pp. 21-22. And in a footnote, Ipatov says the following about Unruh: "*Unruh*, Benjamin Heinrich (1881-1859), a Mennonite historian born in Russia. Was director of the Mennonite School of Commerce in Halbstadt. His political orientation would have placed him in the camp of the Black Hundreds. Along with other Octobrists, he was a candidate for election to the Constituent Assembly. Migrated to Germany after the October Revolution where he became the director of the 'Association of Russian Germans' founded in Berlin. *Collaborated with the Fascists*" [my emphasis], note 2, p. 21.

87. At the conclusion of that installment, Unruh wrote: "I wish to thank Mrs. Maria Braun, Oberursel, widow of our late and beloved friend Peter Braun, for sending us many of her husband's manuscripts, who, with a rare conscientiousness and precision *in small matters* [Unruh's way of saying that Braun's larger interpretation of the problem was flawed] organized our Mennonite archive. We shall preserve his intellectual property into the smallest detail for him. Critical marginal notes to his individual historical writings are not intended to diminish his accomplishments as the appointed archivist of the 1917 General Conference of Mennonites. The following principle applies to all scholarship: 'I love Plato, but I love truth more.' Our colleague Peter Braun sought to serve this truth, but in the *Herkunftsfrage* he had not familiarized himself enough with the specialized literature; more about this later!" *Bote* (24 March, 1937): 3.
88. # 9 "Vorfragen," *Bote* (7 April, 1937): 2. Unruh expanded on this theme in a more scholarly context in his "Kolonisatorische Berührungen zwischen den Mennoniten und den Siedlern anderer Konfessionen im Weichselgebiet und in der Neumark," *Deutsches Archiv für Landes- u. Volksforschung*, IV, #2 (September, 1940): 254-272. Aside from attempting to bring Mennonites into closer relationship with their surrounding neighbors in these regions, thereby emphasizing their common *Deutschtum*, Unruh also attempted to solve the problem of their origins. Clearly a difficult problem in and of itself, Unruh had also to treat it from a Nazi perspective since the journal, in which he published the article, had been established in 1934 to serve as the publication arm of the Nazi-influenced group of *Volkswissenschaftler*. See Fahlbusch, *Wissenschaften*: 141-142. But the matter is further complicated by the early presence in Prussia of Spiritualists like Martin Cellarius in 1524-1525 [see my "Martin Cellarius: On the Borders of Heresy," *Profiles of Radical Reformers*, H-J Goertz, ed. (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1982):

234-246.], Caspar von Schwenckfeld, who corresponded extensively with Prussian Reformers like Paul Speratus during the 1520s and 1530s, and Dutch Sacramentarians who arrived there in the wake of a long-standing Dutch commercial presence in the region. Medieval Mysticism, millenarianism, and an anti-sacramental attitude were intermingled in these movements and were gradually, with the rise of the Anabaptist movement, subsumed under the latter term. It was in the interest of the established Catholic and Reformation Churches not to clarify these movements but to lump them all together. Mennonite scholars dealing with Prussia, whether or not under Nazi influence, have done little better, and more recently the "polygenesis" thesis of Anabaptist origins has muddled the waters still further. But it is clear from reading Hartknoch's church history that he does not mention believer's baptism as being a characteristic of any of these movements until mid-century, which means that none of them were "Anabaptist."

Margrave Albrecht had certainly been present at the Second Diet of Speyer in 1529 where the edict against Anabaptists was passed. In 1535 Moravian Huterites, seeking to escape persecution under Archduke Ferdinand of Austria, requested permission from him to enter the country. They sent a confession of faith along with their request. So it would seem that authorities in Prussia knew of the Anabaptists from the very beginning, at the latest from 1535 on. The Huterites were turned down, however. In early February, 1542 Gerhard Westerburg arrived; he had been baptized by Bernard Rothmann in Münster in February of 1534. In possession of a doctorate in Roman law from the University of Padua, he became counsellor to Margrave Albrecht on 22 February, 1542 but was released from service in June of 1543. The reasons given were his Sacramentarian views; another reason may have been the fact that the "Dutch" party at court was losing power. To what extent prominent people knew of Westerburg's "Münster interlude" is not known, but Münster was an event that became indelibly marked on the German consciousness. About this time, perhaps as early as 1542, Dutch "Menists" began to arrive.

The year is critical for in 1544 Anna, Countess of Oldenbourg, was commanded, in an edict from Charles V, to execute all heretics. In her response to the command, however, the Countess distinguished 'Menists' – the first official use of the term – from the other Anabaptists (Münsterites) and declared that they should be tolerated. As we have already noted, Prussian Mennonites – even as late as the Russian Mennonites – had retained this distinction in their memory and employed it as they began to recover their heritage. Countess Anna's distinction, based on a judgment about the followers of Menno made by John a'Lasco, came gradually to be acknowledged in wider and wider circles, allowing other princes and cities to get around the Imperial laws against *Wiedertäufer*. That this distinction came to be embedded in Danzig's laws is made apparent in Gottfried Lengnich's *Ius Publicum Civitatis Gedanensis* where we read:

"Only the Mennonites, who do not belong to any of the three publicly recognized religions [Lutheran, Reformed, Catholic], are tolerated without let or hindrance and constitute a twofold congregation which hold their church services in two houses located in the suburbs. In the second half of the sixteenth century, when the Mennonites, *coming from the Netherlands*, began to find their way into Danzig and its suburbs, some ordinances, referring to them as Anabaptists, were issued against them in order to be rid of them. But when it became known *that they were not Anabaptists* the authorities stopped attacking them because of their religion. Nor did King John III want to pass any laws against them but postponed any actions against them until he knew them better; and whereas the most recent

royal ordinance may have inhibited their economic activity somewhat, it has not denied them their right of residence granted thus far," p. 509.

Lengnich argues that this distinction took place shortly after their arrival *from the Netherlands* in the mid sixteenth century. Menno's only known letter to his followers in Prussia was written in 1549, indicating that they were an established group by then and not only scattered individuals. All of this would appear to confirm what I argued about Menno and the beginning of Dutch Anabaptism in my 1998 *MQR* (July), pp. 351-388, essay. The above would also imply that *Wiedertäufer* or *Anabaptists* would not be allowed to remain in the land; that is, Swiss Anabaptists and even Moravian Hutterites would be excluded. And this is precisely what happened in 1603/1604.

In 1603 a group of Hutterite missionaries under the leadership of a former Swiss Bernese Anabaptist named Joseph Hauser arrived in the region around Elbing in order to "infiltrate the land with the Gospel." Around Elbing they encountered many "Monisten," divided into the "Klärichen" and "Bekumberten" – Frisians and Flemish – who did not regard each other as brothers and sisters but who nevertheless claimed Menno Simons as their common father. These Mennonites were quite apparently being tolerated by the local authorities, and so Hauser and his fellow Hutterites decided to return the following year to attempt to establish a permanent Hutterite settlement. But the authorities refused to allow them to do so. What is interesting and instructive about this incident is the fact that the Hutterites knew nothing about these "Monisten" in Prussia and appear even to have known very little about Menno Simons himself; they certainly did not know Mennonites were being tolerated in the region. If that is true of the Moravian Hutterites, the most traveled sixteenth-century Anabaptists it has to be all the more true of Swiss and South German Anabaptists. If some of the latter had already sought sanctuary in Prussia, the Hutterites would have known of it. Secondly, if the Hutterites were denied sanctuary in 1604 then certainly any other *Wiedertäufer* would also have been denied entry. That means that at least the first two or three generations – perhaps even more – of radicals to be tolerated in Prussia were *Dutch Mennonites*. In other words, the *Dutch origin* of the Prussian Mennonites would appear to be assured no matter what Unruh and his followers tried to demonstrate.

A. N. Ipatov, *Mennoniten: 27-28*, citing S. Potocki, *Polozenie miejscosci niemieckiej w Polsce w latach 1918-1939 ze szczegolnym umsglednieniem Pomorza Gdanskiego* (Gdansk 1965): 24, even argues: "A short time later [shortly after the end of the 1540s] the Patricians became convinced that the Mennonite articles of faith had nothing in common with the radical doctrines of the Münsterite Anabaptists and fully acknowledged the service rendered by the Mennonite weavers in the development of the hitherto in Gdansk unknown colorful ribbons. M. Boguzka, the Polish historian, writes in his book, "Das Gdansker Textilkgewerbe vom 16. bis Mitte des 17. Jahrhunderts" (Wrocław. 1956, S. 69-73), that the Gdansk city council, in its decree of 3 March, 1635 allowed the Mennonites to build houses outside the city walls and possess moveable property."

Over the past summer I have begun preliminary investigations into this whole complex of issues and hope to address them in a comprehensive essay in the near future, for there is considerably more to be said on the matter. It is also interesting to note that Ipatov, p. 10, was aware of this development regarding the importance of the distinction Countess Anna made in 1544. See also Christine Hege, *Kurze Geschichte der Mennoniten*: 53-54.

89. Braun's views appear to be reflected in the some 6,500 petitions on the land liqui-

dation issue sent to the Tsar in July, 1915 and April/May, 1916. There, in the virtually identical petitions, it is repeatedly stated: "Now Mennonites are native citizens of Great Russia, ready to sacrifice everything for their beloved Tsar and Fatherland. Some mistakenly consider Mennonites to be so-called 'colonists from Prussia,' but the truth is that our ancestors came from the Netherlands, contemporary Holland and Belgium, and belong to the Dutch nationality. From there they settled in Poland, and only after the partition of Poland, some Mennonites – against their will from 1816 to 1831 – were forced to accept Prussian citizenship. From this they were so fortunately delivered through migration to Russia, due to the mercy of Your Imperial Majesty's Great Great-Grandmother Catherine II. Many of us, who settled in Russia in 1788, came from the Polish city of Gdansk, and never had any Prussian citizenship. This origin of the Mennonites is proven by the acts and documents stored in the archives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Petrograd and Moscow (File XVI: File of Gdansk 178601791. Colonist Files 1786-1792)."

90. Braun's argument may well have been a response to the Taurida governor's 29 April, 1915, proclamation to the Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld volost governments that if they really were of Dutch ancestry and could prove that they had never become Prussian citizens, the liquidation laws would not apply to them. Now this whole issue of the citizenship of the Polish/Prussian Mennonites is another complex problem. Perhaps the following can shed some light on it.

The first study to look at the issue of citizenship in Western Civilization is Peter Riesenberg's *Citizenship in the Western Tradition* (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1992). Riesenberg makes the case that citizenship, both in Antiquity and in Early Modern Europe, was located in the Greek *polis*, the Roman *civis* and the Italian Renaissance cities (later city states). But not everyone in these cities was automatically a citizen; all kinds of conditions were attached to citizenship. In the countryside, especially in feudal Europe, other relationships pertained. There one had lords and vassals, each with certain rights and obligations. Gradually, as royal centralized power increased, these mutual rights and obligations were transformed: monarchs became more powerful (more absolute) and vassals lost status, becoming "subjects" with fewer and fewer rights. The ability of groups or "estates" to negotiate such unique rights and privileges as they had possessed earlier declined and a greater uniformity of "subject" status was introduced. To this development the Holy Roman Empire and Poland were exceptions.

In the Empire, "free imperial cities" under the declining power of the emperor still had considerable independence throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, continuing to grant citizenship in their cities. In the countryside or within the emerging territorial states like Prussia (which became a kingdom in 1701), Württemberg, etc., residents – within the cities that did not possess the special status of "free imperial cities," but even within the latter as well – became subjects with fewer and fewer rights and increasing obligations. Poland, whose kingdom was notorious for its weak monarchy during this period, continued to allow virtual independence to cities like Elbing and Danzig [Lengnich's study of Danzig's laws makes this eminently clear]. The former city, Elbing, granted citizenship to Mennonites, but Danzig refused. Nonetheless, all of these regions remained under Polish suzerainty until the first partition of Poland in 1772 when, with the exception of Danzig and Thorn, they came under Prussian rule, their citizens becoming "subjects" of a militaristic state. The latter (Danzig and Thorn) remained self-governing city states until the second partition in 1793. By 1800 Mennonites could also become citizens of Danzig, but by then even the proud and independent Danzig citizens had become "subjects," and not very happy "sub-

jects," of the Prussian state.

Therefore, Mennonites migrating to Russia from Danzig, Thorn and the surrounding regions controlled by them (all these late medieval and early modern "free" cities had their surrounding "contados") in 1789 would never have been "subjects" of the Prussian state. Those coming from Elbing and elsewhere in West Prussia would have been so only since 1772. And most of the latter did not like this change either. For, whereas they did not respond to Catherine the Great's first, 1763 invitation to settle in Russia, they did so in considerable numbers to her second invitation of 1787. Those who left directly from Danzig- controlled regions would have been subjects of the Polish crown; many of the others, however, came to Danzig before leaving, where, according to Peter J. Klassen, they "acquired a brief residence . . . [and] then were given Danzig visas as residents (not citizens) of the city."

Now, not only Mennonites were not granted citizenship in Danzig; others were as well. Indeed, one could probably argue that the majority in any such city were not "citizens" but residents, aliens, temporary visitors or merchants from other places. To call all such persons "Unbürger" as Unruh does is to impose a greatly changed twentieth century perspective upon an earlier period. Whereas there were at times advantages to being a citizen, there were also times when it was not and when persons consciously chose not to become citizens. Certainly it appears that most Prussian Mennonites seem to have preferred their previous status under Polish rule to becoming "subjects," not citizens, of a militaristic Prussian state. Having said this, Peter Braun's description – though also perhaps having an ulterior motive – probably comes closer to the truth than does Unruh's argument. But neither of them came anywhere close to seeing the complexity of the case. See Peter J. Klassen, "Barriers to Emigration from Prussia," *MQR*, LXXI (January, 1998) # 1: 84-95.

91. As a consequence of this argument Unruh was later to go to great lengths to demonstrate that Mennonites and their German neighbors had not lived as isolated from one another as Russian Mennonites, Peter Braun included, had argued during the war years.
92. Already in installment five of another series entitled "Praktische Fragen," Unruh had argued: "I find most deplorable a certain tendency in some of the submissions to argue that the Mennonites, who came under Prussian rule at the Partition of Poland, had done so 'totally against their will.' That too! There were no more enthusiastic admirers of the great and just Frederick than the Mennonites. Just ask our West Prussian brothers what they have to say about such historical information." *Bote* (11 Nov. 1936): 1. Unruh was not quite so dogmatic when he came to Braun's piece. In any case, by 1936 West Prussian Mennonites were themselves rabid National Socialists which fact colored – just a little – their historical memory.
93. B. H. Unruh, *Die Auswanderung*: 552e.
94. *Die Auswanderung*: 358.
95. *Die Auswanderung*: 554.
96. We leave it to the reader to decide whether this "conviction" was Fast's or Unruh's.
97. B. H. Unruh to SS Obergeruppenführer Lorenz Leit, 21 September, 1942. MB Studies Centre & Archives: Winnipeg.
98. Letter in the possession of Irmgard Hörner-Braun: Ibersheim, Germany. Unruh does not say that Braun's position was wrong. He says only that it had done the Mennonites much harm.



99. See the reference in the previous chapter to the possibility that Unruh was influenced by the Lutheran concept of the *Wundermann* in his thinking on Hitler.
100. On one occasion Unruh stated that the above manuscript had already been in print when the war ended. Where and under whose auspices? The answer may be found in a comment in Michael Fahlbusch's *Wissenschaften*: 619, where we read: "A planned third series [dealing with Germans in Russia], the 'Schriftenreihe der Sammlung Georg Leibbrandt,' of 1943 was to contain seven volumes, among which were to be contributions by Karl A. Fischer and *Benjamin H. Unruh* [my emphasis]. But in spite of the fact that the "Reichsminister für die besetzten Ostgebiete" [the minister in charge of the occupied eastern regions] had approved the project and the paper needed for the publications the series never saw the light of day." Clearly, then, Unruh had been about to publish the manuscript in a Nazi government sponsored series. That would never have occurred had the manuscript not met Nazi ideological preconditions. This also indicates that Unruh was a scholar in good standing with the Nazi authorities which controlled all scholarly publications in Germany after 1933. As a matter of fact, his name is listed as one of 31 "Mitarbeiter" of the "Publikations-Stelle Ost" under the leadership of Emil Meyen and Margarete Woltner. See Fahlbusch, *Wissenschaft*: 600. His name is the only Mennonite name to appear in Fahlbusch's study.
101. *Die Auswanderung*: 552d.
102. *Die Auswanderung*: 2.
103. *Die Auswanderung*: 96; 118; 245, note 269; 222-223; 278-280.
104. "The Mennonite Commission, in a document submitted to the Duma, protested the way in which the Russian Germans were being treated. Prof. Lindemann, however, recommended they confront the government with the fact that the Mennonites, in their majority, originally came from the region of the Netherlands in order to take away from the government, even in this regard, any formal grounds for their actions . . . ." *Die Auswanderung*: 96.
105. *Die Auswanderung*: 96-97. How such a statement could be squared with some 6,500 individual Mennonite petitions all claiming that "our ancestors came for the Netherlands, contemporary Holland and Belgium, and belong to the Dutch nationality," Unruh fails to inform us.
106. Unruh's study was finally published in 1955, but not under the above title, and perhaps not with the same content. Rather, after the collapse of Nazi Germany, he called it: *Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen im 16., 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*.
107. The DAI, *Deutscher Auslands-Institut*, is mentioned a number of times in Burleigh's *Germany Turns Eastward* (106, 272, 285 & 286) and appears to have been part of the *Ostforschung* network.
108. *Die Auswanderung*: 278-279. The question of the *Herkunftsfrage* itself, or at least its importance, may have had its source in the political *Ostforschung* of the time which sought to establish the Germanic origin of ethnic minorities in the regions formerly under Polish control in order to justify Germany's seizure of Polish lands.

## CHAPTER 15

1. Even Harry Loewen, ed., *Road to Freedom: Mennonites Escape the Land of Suffering* (Kitchener, ON & Scottdale, PA: Pandora & Herald Press, 2000), consistently and as one of the Russian Mennonites who escaped, speaks of these Mennonites

- as *Volksdeutsche*. See, for example, p. 34: "... including Mennonites and other *Volksdeutsche* . . .," and pp. 30, 31, 32, 34.
2. See *ibid*: 33.
  3. Had the war's end not come when it did, Unruh's manuscript would have been published. For in an "Arbeitsbericht" written by Unruh on 19 December, 1945, he observed: "I am already working on volume VI of the Russian Mennonite history. Volume I, which I prepared with the extraordinarily conscientious and meticulous Mennonite genealogist Franz Harder, Danzig, and the assistance of a number of others, especially the beloved brother G. Reimer ('The Emigration of the Low German Mennonites') *was already printed* [my emphasis]. I had received the last batch of proofs, as had Harder, who was still able to prepare an index of names and places. I do not know what is to happen or what has happened to the volume . . ." *Benjamin H. Unruh Papers*. Fahlbusch, as we have already pointed out, confirms that the manuscript was to be published "in a planned third series, the 'Schriftenreihe der Sammlung Georg Leibbrandt' of 1943 for which seven contributions had already been accepted, among them [manuscripts] from Karl A. Fischer and Benjamin H. Unruh . . ." *Wissenschaften*: 619.
  4. I chose to go with *fortuna* here rather than *providentia*, although I had at first used the latter term – not wishing to replicate Unruh's presumption.
  5. The story is told in Peter & Elfrieda Dyck, *Up From the Rubble: The Epic Rescue of Thousands of War-ravaged Mennonite Refugees* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1991): 81-131. For the larger story, see the excellent article by T. D. Regehr, "Of Dutch or German Ancestry? Mennonite Refugees, MCC, and the International Refugee Organization," *JMS*, vol. 13 (1995): 7-25.
  6. (Weierhof/Pfalz: Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein, 1940).
  7. See especially pp. 1-23.
  8. Herbert and Maureen Klassen, *Ambassador to His People: C. F. Klassen and the Russian Mennonite Refugees* (Winnipeg & Hillsboro, KS: Kindred Press, 1990): 187.
  9. Penner, *Ansiedlung*: 66. It would not surprise us to find that this paragraph was added at the time of publication, perhaps at the insistence of Benjamin Unruh, in the same way that he had earlier modified Hylkema's statement when the latter's 1921 book on the Russian Mennonite plight was translated into German. Had the author made the argument, it should have – perhaps would have – been done at the very outset of the piece. Coming, as it does, at the end, it seemed to this reader totally out of character with the rest of the study.
  10. Regehr, "Of Dutch or German Ancestry," p. 11.
  11. Quoted in *ibid*: 13-14. It is interesting to note that Royse's argument was virtually that of the Tsarist government during the land liquidation crisis. Royse clearly sought to separate race from ethnicity in his analysis of the Ukrainian Mennonites. Race may have been Dutch 400 years ago, but their ethnicity was German. Cornelius Krahn was later to try to reintegrate the two.
  12. IX-15-I, *Mennonite Central Committee Collection*, "G. L. Warren . . . Memorandum," MCA.
  13. To make this case, Krahn quoted from his own unpublished manuscript (not named), stating: "They [the Ukrainian Mennonites] have in their own way been fighting Prussian militarism and some of the characteristics of Prussian civilization, not merely for five or ten years, but ever since the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. For the same reason that they went to Russia 150 years ago, they are now attempting to get away from Russia. This record should show clearly that they have a religious-cultural background which does not justify a classification of Ger-

- man ethnical origin with its present implications," page 4.
14. Krahn failed to mention, however, that this had changed just before and during World War I.
  15. "Memorandum," p. 10.
  16. "Memorandum," p. 3.
  17. "Memorandum," p. 14. Smith, *Story*: 481. Krahn, who revised and enlarged Smith's 5<sup>th</sup> edition (Newton, KS: Faith & Life Press, 1981), p. 312, took out the last sentence with its reference to "Holländerei".
  18. "Memorandum," p. 19.
  19. "Memorandum," pp. 21-24.
  20. "Memorandum," p. 25.
  21. "Memorandum," p. 27.
  22. "Memorandum," p. 29.
  23. "Memorandum," p. 30.
  24. Regehr, "Of Dutch or German Ancestry," pp. 14-15.
  25. Quoted in *ibid*: 16.
  26. *Ibid*: 18-19.
  27. *Ibid*: 13.
  28. See the *Widmung* (dedication) to his *Die Ostwanderungen*, p. III. Having been born and raised in Oak Bluff, Manitoba, Canada, I find myself in a quandary as to what to make of such facts.
  29. Unruh, *Die Ostwanderungen*: 24.
  30. Unruh, *Die Ostwanderungen*: 41.
  31. Unruh, *Die Ostwanderungen*: 25.
  32. See especially Bruno Schumacher, *Niederländische Ansiedlungen im Herzogtum Preussen zur Zeit Herzog Albrechts (1525-1568)* (Leipzig: Verlag von Duncker & Humblot, 1903).
  33. A. L. E. Vreheyden, *Anabaptism in Flanders 1530-1650: A Century of Struggle* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1961): 25ff.
  34. See Peter Braun's *Kto takie Mennonity?* and the 1922 letter of the Siberian Mennonites to the Mennonite minister and congregation in Amsterdam, for example.
  35. To what extent these refugees were aware of more favorable conditions in Danzig and its environs is difficult to say. Yet already in 1550 a certain Jan van Sol, who had fled the Netherlands in 1530, spending much of his time in Danzig, reported to the emperor's secretary De Wierden, as Verheyden put it: "Explicitly he assured the imperial secretary that the *Dutch Anabaptists* [my emphasis] were not unwelcome there, because the authorities saw in their immigration a profitable affair. Not only did the Dutch immigrants spontaneously offer not less than thirty guilders' rent instead of the usual four, but beyond that their working methods resulted in an undeniable improvement in the local agricultural and textile industries; these changes were, of course, regarded very favorably by the Danzig authorities." *Anabaptism in Flanders*: 32.
  36. (Leeuwarden: A. Jongbloed c.v, 1959).
  37. Postma, *Das niederländische Erbe*: 13. Postma also quoted the following passage of a personal letter to him from Kurt Kauenhoven of Goettingen: "Much has been assumed on this subject and many [people] have at times indulged in fanciful thinking; it is therefore high time that the evidence be soberly examined. That you want to do it from the Dutch perspective is doubly to be welcomed since the German scholars generally lacked the intimate knowledge of the Dutch [language] that you bring to the table. Moreover we have not adequately taken the Dutch scholarship on the issue into account, a scholarship quite advanced already some

- time ago.”
38. Postma, *Das niederländische Erbe*: 21.
  39. *Ibid*: 36.
  40. *Ibid*: 41-57.
  41. *Ibid*: 58-81.
  42. *Ibid*: 103.
  43. *Ibid*: 160.
  44. *Ibid*: 143.
  45. *Ibid*: 162. Whereas German may have been spoken earlier by those Mennonites living on the land, those living in Danzig and Königsberg – probably because of the commercial contact with the Netherlands – maintained the Dutch language much longer.
  46. *Ibid*: 156.
  47. Ipatov, *Wer sind die Mennoniten*: 11-24.
  48. *Ibid*: 24-27.
  49. *Ibid*: 27-42.
  50. *Ibid*: 43-52.

## EPILOGUE

1. See the brief entry by Walter Fellmann under Stauffer's name in the *ML*, IV: 236-237.
2. First published as “Märtyrertheologie und Täuferturn” in: *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* (1933): 545-598, and right after the war in an English translation in the *MQR*, 19 (1945): 170-214.
3. In his “Confession” Obbe Philips wrote: “Thus it continued with muskets, pikes, harquebuses, and halberds. **Thus they would fight and no longer suffer** [my emphasis]. They would put on the armor of David; they would deal out to the godless double their tyranny according to the Scripture. Münster and not Strassburg was then Jerusalem. Amsterdam was given to the children of God. There one insurrection followed another. There the godless would meet their end and be punished. But all that came to nothing. All prophecies were false and lying, for the tables were always turned the other way. Those who denounced others as godless were such themselves. And those who would exterminate the others were themselves annihilated. Everywhere it was dealt out to them twofold. And still we poor people could not yet open our eyes, for it all happened so crudely that we were not able to put our hands on the lies and obscurities. **But God knows that Dietrich and I could never find it in our hearts that such onslaughts were right; we taught firmly against this, but it did no good, for most of the folks were inclined to this . . .** [my emphasis].” (George H. Williams & Angel M. Mergal, eds., *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957): 222-223.
4. In his *Restitution* Rothmann wrote: “It was (God knows) our heartfelt desire when we were baptized to suffer for Christ's sake, whatever might befall us. But it pleased God, and continues to please him, to do otherwise, [revealing to us] that we and all true Christians may at this time not only defend ourselves against the might of the godless with the sword, but that since he has given the sword into the hands of his people, to wreck vengeance on all that is evil and all who act wickedly, over the entire world. For he wishes to renew it [the world] so that only righteousness will reign in it. And this shall be fulfilled . . . The time is at hand.”

- Robert Stupperich, ed., *Die Schriften Bernhard Rothmanns* (Münster, 1970): 282.
5. Christoph Bornhäuser, *Leben und Lehre Menno Simons* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1973): 24. For my response to Bornhäuser, see my "Menno and Muenster: The Man and the Movement" in: Gerald R. Brunk, ed., *Menno Simons: A Reappraisal* (Harrisonburg: Eastern Mennonite University, 1992): 136-140. A similar argument was already employed by Wilhelm Mannhardt to attack the Anabaptist doctrine of nonresistance. He argued that Menno had not been against the use of the sword at first; only after Münster had he become a pacifist. Mannhardt observed: "But Menno and his friends were significantly influenced by their opposition to the fanatical Anabaptists in Münster who declared it to be a duty of the saints, that is of the perfected Christians, to promote their religious convictions with the sword . . ." "Zur Wehrfrage," *MBI*, XVI, # 2 (February, 1869): 15.
  6. Friesen, "Present at the Inception: Menno Simons and the Beginning of Dutch Anabaptism," *MQR*, LXXII (July, 1998), # 4: 351-388. See also the observation by Alan F. Segal in his study of St. Paul regarding the transformational effect of the latter's conversion: "But the primary fact of Paul's personal experience as a Christian is his enormous transformation, his conversion from a persecutor of Christianity to a persecuted advocate of it." *Paul the Convert* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1990): 6.
  7. Johan Huizinga, *Dutch Civilization in the Seventeenth Century and Other Essays*, Arnold J. Pomerans, trans. (New York, 1968): 50-51.
  8. See also Clarence Bauman's *Gewaltlosigkeit im Täufertum* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968).
  9. Hans-Jürgen Goertz, "The Confessional Heritage in its New Mold: What is Mennonite Self-Understanding Today?" in: Calvin Wall Redekopp and Samuel J. Steiner, eds., *Mennonite Identity: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Landham, MD: University Press of America, 1988): 8.
  10. In a recent presentation delivered at the Peace Congress in Osnabrück in 1998 to celebrate the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, I wrote: "That there is little, if any, connection between beliefs and actions seems, at times, also to be the assumption of some social historians with respect to the peaceful witness of the Anabaptists. The advocates of the 'polygenesis' approach to Anabaptist history, for example, would have us believe it does not matter much whether one traces the origin of the movement to Thomas Müntzer, Melchior Hoffmann, or Conrad Grebel and Felix Mantz with respect to the Anabaptist peace position. Ideas do not matter as much as events: that is, it was the Anabaptist experiences in their quarrel with Zwingli and the Zurich power brokers, the defeat of Müntzer and the peasants in the Peasant War of 1524-1525, and the devastating consequences of the war of the 'Saints' in Münster – that is, the logic of events – that convinced the Anabaptists to become 'die Stillen im Lande.' The same argument has been made by Christopher Hill and his students with respect to the Quaker peace position. In the latter case, the Quaker peace convictions are said to have grown out of the failures of Oliver Cromwell in the English Civil War. Is it therefore true, as the American folk song would have it, that the Anabaptists and the Quakers – since they lost their battles – simply 'weren't going to learn war any more'? Is the rejection of war therefore only a good idea for history's losers, but not for its victors?" The original appeared in German: Abraham Friesen, "Der Friedensweg im Täufertum" in: Klaus Gerber, et.al., eds., *Erfahrung und Deutung von Krieg und Frieden: Religion – Geschlechter – Natur und Kultur* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2002): 158.

11. Hans-Jürgen Goertz, "Nationale Erhebung und religioeser Niedergang" in: Hans-Jürgen Goertz, ed., *Umstrittenes Täufertum*: 259-289. For the response, see Diether Goetz Lichti, *Mennoniten im Dritten Reich: Dokumentation und Deutung* (Weierhof/Pfalz: Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein, 1977).
12. Friesen, *Erasmus and the Anabaptists*: note # 71, p. 170.
13. John Eck, *Enchiridion*: 40. See also the debate in Basel between the Catholic Marius, the reformer Oecolampadius, and the Anabaptist Carlin. Duerr & Roth, *Basler Reformationsakten*, II: 581.
14. Even Cardinal Hosius wrote in his *A Most Excellent Treatise of the Begynning of Heresy*, 1565, trans. by Richard Shacklock (Reprint: Scolar Press, 1970), p. 49: "And surely howe many so ever have wrytten agaynst this heresie [the Anabaptists], whether they were Catholykes or heretykes [Protestants], they were able to overthrowe it not so muche by the testimony of the scriptures, as by the autoritie of the Church." See also John C. Wenger, "The Biblicism of the Anabaptists," Guy F. Hershberger, ed., *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1957). On page 172 Wenger writes: "The most eloquent defender [among the Anabaptists] of the sole authority of the Scriptures, however, was Menno Simons . . ."
15. In any case, present-day Mennonite identity is the product of a lengthy process and cannot be "telescoped" in the manner suggested by Goertz.
16. In their text on *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World* (Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Pine Forge Press, 1998), Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann argue in the preface that identity goes beyond ethnicity and race; they therefore take a *constructionist* approach to the problem. This means that ethnicity and race are not treated as "natural phenomena but as human creations." This should also be the preferred approach of the historian even though he may grant that some aspects of human identity may be considered as given.
17. Leonhard von Muralt & Walter Schmid, eds., *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer in der Schweiz*, Vol. I (Zurich: S. Hirzel Verlag, 1952): 17.
18. J. C. Wenger, ed., and Leonard Verduin, trans., *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons, c. 1496-1561* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956): 42.
19. *Complete Writings*: 69.
20. *Complete Writings*: 80.
21. *Complete Writings*: 71.
22. Harry Loewen reminded me of the fact that some scholars, even van Braght, have suggested that these martyrologies were written "because the Dutch Mennonites were losing their earlier vision . . ." If true, it would confirm my later argument about the gradual transformation of the Mennonites themselves.
23. *Luther's Works*, vol. 41 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966): 197.
24. *Chronica, Zeitbuch und Geschichtsbibel* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969): cxxxvii.
25. For the larger analysis, see my "Medieval Heretics or Forerunners of the Reformation," pp. 170-173.
26. See also Robert Kreider, "The Anabaptist Conception of the Church in the Russian Mennonite Environment 1789-1870," *MQR*, XXV (January, 1951): 17-33.
27. See note # 2 to the edition of the "Confession" in G. H. Williams & Angel M. Mergal, eds., *Spiritual and Anabaptists Writers* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957): 206.
28. Michael Grant, *The Ancient Historians*: 286. One can see the same psychology at work in Early Modern paintings of infants where the latter are depicted simply

as small adults, implying no development.

29. See my "Medieval Heretics or Forerunners of the Reformation," pp. 178-181.
30. John Lothrop Motley, *The Rise of the Dutch Republic* (Philadelphia: David McKay Publisher, 1855), I: 85-86. Even such a noted British historian as C. V. Wedgwood could still write in 1944: "While the respectable doctrines of Luther made steady surreptitious progress among the merchants, wilder and more emotional sects flared up among the people. Of these the Anabaptists with their communist creed and uncompromising devotion to their tenets drew upon themselves the greatest odium. Their initial excesses and subsequent piteous tenacity served to divert attention from the Lutherans. These multiplied, as it were, behind the smoke-screen of the Anabaptist pyres." *William the Silent* (New York, Book of the Month Club, 1944): 46. See also G. R. Elton, ed., *The New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. II: *The Reformation 1520-1559* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1962); page 6 of the introduction.
31. They do so by referring to all of these former "Anabaptists" as 'Menists'. Thus the 1626 one states: "... who call themselves Mennonites . . .," Müller, *Mennoniten in Ostfriesland*: 41. The 1641 letter of protection issued by Christian IV of Denmark states: "... that said Mennonites, as they are called today have been labeled above . . . ." Roosen, *Geschichte*: 38. And the 1664 *Schutzbrief* of Karl Ludwig of the Palatinate reads: "... whom one calls Mennonites . . . ." *ML*, II: 461. However, the latter also goes on to command that these "Menists" not rebaptize anyone, in effect forbidding making converts in the surrounding communities.
32. This transformation had nothing to do with the argument of social historians that it was the Anabaptist experiences in their quarrel with Zwingli and the Zurich power brokers, the defeat of Müntzer and the peasants in the Peasant War of 1524-1525, and the devastating consequences of the war of the 'Saints' in Muenster - that is, the logic of events - that convinced the Anabaptists to become 'die Stillen im Lande.'
33. This is a transformation not unlike the one Max Weber posited for the Calvinistic Puritans in his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. by Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958).
34. See the East Friesland *Schutzbrief*.
35. See *ML*, II: 461.
36. See J. H. Plumb's introduction to C. R. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire 1600-1800* (London: Pelican Books, 1988): xxii.
37. See Wedgwood, *William the Silent*: 117. Boxer, *Dutch Seaborne Empire*: 31-32, also points to the growing power and influence of the Calvinist preachers and their hatred of all things Spanish and Catholic in the development of this Dutch national sentiment.
38. *Ibid*: 30. See also Boxer, *Dutch Seaborne Empire*: 30.
39. Wedgwood asserts that "... linguistic consciousness among the people had developed sharply since William [the Silent] was a young man, and while the Walloon provinces thought him too Dutch, the Flemish provinces thought him too French . . . ." *William the Silent*: 192.
40. K. H. D. Haley, *The Dutch in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1972): 9-10.
41. *Ibid*: 95.
42. John H. Murray, *Amsterdam in the Age of Rembrandt* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967): 145-147. W. J. Kuehler, the Dutch Mennonite scholar of the early twentieth century stated, in his historical address at the first Mennonite World Conference held in Basel in 1925: "There were two distinctly different

- intellectual currents [at work], currents I will describe to you as embodied in two different persons, *both Dutchmen and both belonging to our brotherhood: Vondel the poet and Rembrandt the artist . . .*" *Bericht*: 59.
43. Cultural historians argue that groups that separate themselves through migration from the mother country usually remain static in their cultural and linguistic development, while the culture of the mother country continues to evolve.
  44. See C. V. Wedgwood, *William the Silent*: 161-162.
  45. See my *History and Renewal*.
  46. See Postma, *Das niederländische Erbe*: 131-132.
  47. *Ibid*: 132-133.
  48. See G. P. Gooch, *Frederick the Great: The Ruler, the Writer, the Man* (New York, Dorset Press, 1990): 87. Danzig Mennonites must surely have known of Frederick's designs upon their sovereignty (under Polish suzerainty).
  49. Klassen, *A Homeland for Strangers*: 30. T. O. Hylkema confirmed, in a general sense, this assessment in an address at the 1925 Basel Mennonite World Conference when he stated: "In agreement with my American brothers I believe that only if we, in principle, recognize nonresistance as our highest ideal and seek, with all our strength, to live up to it will the spiritual life of our congregations truly blossom. *Where it has been sacrificed, the way has been paved for the dissolution of the church in the world* [my emphasis]. In contrast, where it is once more appropriated, there the church becomes more goal oriented, [its members] more intimately united with one another and better able – with their Lord's help – to stand firm in the world, overcome the difficult tests of their faith, and advance toward greater glory." *Bericht*: 132.
  50. In one of his letters to his old friend, J. H. Janzen, Peter Braun denied the generally held Mennonite belief that their forefathers had left Prussia for religious reasons. The reasons, he asserted, had been economic. On the importance of this martyr tradition for the Russian Mennonites, see Walter Sawatsky, "Historical Roots of a Post-Gulag Theology for Russian Mennonites," *MQR*, LXXVI (April, 2002): 149-180; and Harry Loewen, "A Mennonite-Christian View of Suffering: The Case of Russian Mennonites in the 1930s and 1940s," *MQR*, LXXVII (January, 2003): 47-68.
  51. After I had written these words, I read in J. H. Plumb's introduction to C. R. Boxer's *The Dutch Seaborne Empire*: xxv, the following statement: "In contrast with England, its [the Netherlands'] political problems and social divisions were never caught up in an imaginary sense of the past. The real world was the Dutch world. The precarious nature of its strategic situation as well as the nature of its economic activity bred a sense of actuality."
  52. B. H. Unruh may well have been wrong in his assertion that the Russian Mennonite was a-historical because of the nature of his Protestantism. According to Boxer (and J. H. Plumb in his introduction), the Northern Netherlands were a "country without a history." *Ibid*: xxvii.
  53. Alexander Mack and his Pietistic followers did the same thing when they founded the Church of the Brethren in 1708.
  54. In Jacob P. Becker's *Origin*: 68-69, we read: "After receiving this advice, Claassen contacted certain officials who were Baptists from whom he received information and a booklet on baptism by immersion . . ." And on p. 70 it is made clear that this booklet was the critical factor in the introduction of immersion baptism in the fledgling Mennonite Brethren Church.
  55. At the 1925 Mennonite World Conference, a Pfarrer Weissmann representing the "Basler Missionshaus" remarked: "Finally, I am reminded of the former seminary



[Predigerschule] here in which so many Mennonites were educated. It was a melancholy joy for me, at the beginning of the war, still to be able to teach some of these brothers. It is my quiet hope that there will come another time in which the sons of Russian Mennonites will allow themselves to be prepared for a holy service here." **Bericht:** 16.

56. This attitude is reflected in the following statement by John Wesley: "I will not quarrel with you about my opinions; only see that your heart is right toward God, that you know and love the Lord Jesus Christ; that you love your neighbor, and walk as your Master walked, and I desire no more. I am sick of opinions; am weary to hear them; my soul loathes this frothy food. Give me solid and substantial religion; give me a humble, gentle lover of God and man; a man full of mercy and good faith, without partiality and without hypocrisy; a man laying himself out in the work of faith, the patience of hope, the labor of love. Let my soul be with these Christians where so ever they are, and whatsoever opinion they are of!"
57. For these purposes, see my *History and Renewal*: 78-112, especially 102-112.
58. This was not exclusively the case, for many of them were educated at Barmen.
59. See especially the chapter "Ludwig Keller, Hans Denck, and the German Mennonites," in my *History and Renewal*: 41-77.
60. See the extensive list of German books, periodically advertised for sale in the *Friedensstimme*, in H. J. Braun's Halbstadt bookstore.
61. In his Mennonite World Conference address at Basel in 1925, Jacob Kroeker said of the Russian Mennonites: "I believe that I speak from the heart of every delegate when I say: the profound experience of salvation of the fathers is no longer the experience of the sons. To be sure we bear the name and glory of our fathers, but we no longer possess either its source or its power. To be sure we admire their attachment to God and their detachment from the world, but we frequently no longer deport ourselves in this reformation spirit of a citizenship that is at home in heaven. The sickle was often more important to us than the sanctuary, possessing the earth more worthwhile than the heritage of the saints in heaven. Having died spiritually, the righteousness of our lives became for us a righteousness of works. No longer walking with God, we transferred our allegiance from Christ to a Christian church. Without fellowship with the source of power that comes from God, we contented ourselves with the cultivation of our own powers." **Bericht:** 31-32. If Grebel and Menno's decision to follow Christ's way of peace grew out of their conversions, then – perhaps – the Ukrainian Mennonites' departure from this way marked the absence of such an experience, as Kroeker seemed to assert above.



# Bibliography

- Abraham, Richard. *Alexander Kerensky, The First Love of the Revolution*. New York, 1987.
- Ascher, Abraham. *P. A. Stolypin: The Search for Stability in Late Imperial Russia*. Stanford, CA, 2001.
- Auhagen, Otto. *Die Schicksalswende des Russlanddeutschen Bauerntums in den Jahren 1927-1930*. Leipzig, 1942.
- Balmuth, Daniel. *Censorship in Russia, 1865-1905*. Washington, DC, 1979.
- Bauman, Clarence. *Gewaltlosigkeit im Täufertum*. Leiden, 1968.
- Becker, Jacob P. *The Origin of the Mennonite Brethren Church*. Hillsboro, KS, 1973.
- Belk, Fred Richard. *The Great Trek of the Russian Mennonites to Central Asia 1880-1884*. Scottdale, PA, 1976.
- Berglar, Peter. *Walther Rathenau, Seine Zeit, Seim Werk, Seine Persönlichkeit*. Bremen, 1970.
- Bergmann, Cornelius. *Die Täuferbewegung im Kanton Zürich*. Leipzig, 1916.
- Beyreuther, Erich. *Der Weg der Evangelischen Allianz in Deutschland*. Wuppertal, 1969.
- Billington, James H. *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture*. New York, 1966.
- Blake, Andrew, ed. *The Religious World of Russian Culture*, vol. II. The Hague, 1975.
- . *The Ecumenical World of Orthodox Civilization*. The Hague, 1974.
- Black, Cyril E. *The Transformation of Russian Society*. Cambridge, MA, 1960.

- Blaupot ten Cate, S. *Geschiedkundig Onderzoek van Menno Simons*. Amsterdam, 1844.
- Bookbinder, Paul. *Weimar Germany. The Republic of the Reasonable*. Manchester & New York, 1996.
- Brandenburg, Hans. *The Meek and the Mighty*. London & Oxford, 1974.
- Braun, Heinrich J. *Zur Erinnerung an das 25 Jährige Bestehen der ersten Mennonitischen Druckerei in Russland*. Halbstadt. 1912.
- Braun, Peter J. *Der Molotschnaer Mennoniten-Schulrat 1869-1919: Zum Gedenktag seines 50 jährigen Bestehens*, Wladimir Suess, ed. Goettingen, 2001.
- Browder, Robert Paul, & Kerensky, Alexander F. *The Russian Provisional Government 1917*. Stanford, CA, 1961.
- Brown, John Newton. *Das Leben und Zeitalter Menno's, des berühmten holländischen Reformators*. Philadelphia, 1854.
- Buchanan, Sir George. *My Mission to Russia and other Diplomatic Memories*, 2 vols. Boston, 1903.
- Bulgakov, Sergius. *The Orthodox Church*. New York, 1935.
- Burleigh, Michael. *Germany turns Eastward. A Study of Ostforschung in the Third Reich*. Cambridge, 1988.
- Byrnes, Robert F. *Pobedonostsev: His Life and Thought*. London & Bloomington, 1968.
- Choldin, Marianna Tax. *A Fence Around the Empire: Russian Censorship of Western Ideas under the Tsars*. Durham, 1985,
- Conroy, Mary Schaeffer. *Peter Arkadévich Stolypin. Practical Politics in Late Tsarist Russia*. Boulder, CO. 1976.
- Cornell, Stephen & Hartmann, Douglas. *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World*. Thousand Oaks, CA, 1998.
- Cracraft, James. *The Church Reform of Peter the Great*. Stanford, CA, 1971.

- Cramer, A. M. *Het Leven en Verrigtingen van Menno Simons*. Amsterdam, 1835.
- Crisp, Olga & Edmondson, Linda, eds. *Civil Religion in Imperial Russia*. Oxford, 1989.
- Curtis, John Shelton. *Church and State in Russia*. New York, 1940.
- Daly, Jonathan W. *Autocracy under Siege: Security Police and Opposition in Russia 1866-1905*. Dekalb, 1998.
- De Hoop Scheffer, J. G. *Geschiedenis der Kerkhervorming in Nederland van haar onstaan tot 1531*. Amsterdam, 1873.
- Denikin, General A. *The White Army*. Gulf Breeze, FL, 1973.
- Dirks, Heinrich. *Das Reich Gottes im Lichte der Gleichnisse*. Gnadenfeld, 1892.
- Dmytryshyn, Basil, ed. *Imperial Russia: A Source Book, 1700-1917*, 3rd ed. Fort Worth. 1990.
- Driediger, Leo. *Mennonite Identity in Conflict*. Lewiston & Queenston, 1988.
- Dueck, Abe J. *Moving Beyond Secession: Defining Russian Mennonite Brethren Mission and Identity 1872-1922*. Winnipeg & Hillsboro, 1997.
- Dyck, Harvey Leonard. *Weimar Germany and Soviet Russia 1926-1933. A Study in Diplomatic Instability*. New York, 1966.
- Dyck, Peter J. *Troubles and Triumphs 1914-1924*. Springstein, MB, 1981.
- Ediger, H. *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben*. Karlsruhe, 1927.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Beschlüsse der von den geistlichen und anderen Vertreter der Mennonitengemeinden Russlands abgehaltenen Konferenzen für die Jahre 1879 bis 1913*. Berdiansk, 1914.
- Ehrt, Adolf. *Die Mennoniten in Russland von seiner Einwanderung bis zur Gegenwart*. Berlin/Leipzig, 1932.

Elliger, Walter et al. *325 Jahre Mennonitengemeinde Ibersheim 1661-1986*. Worms, n.d.

Epp, David H. *Die Chortizer Mennoniten. Versuch einer Darstellung des Entwicklungsganges derselben*. Rosenthal, 1889.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Johann Cornies. Züge aus seinem Leben and Wirken*. Berdiansk, 1909.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Die Memriker Ansiedlung. Zum 25-jährigen Bestehen derselben im Herbst 1910*. Berdiansk, 1910.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Kurze Erklärungen and Erläuterungen zum Katechismus der christlichen taufgesinnten Gemeinden, so Mennoniten genannt werden*. Odessa, 1897.

Epp, Frank H. *Mennonite Exodus: The Rescue and Re-Settlement of the Russian Mennonites since the Communist Revolution*. Altona. MB, 1962.

\_\_\_\_\_. "An Analysis of Germanism and National Socialism in the Immigrant Newspaper of a Canadian Minority Group, the Mennonites, in the 1930s." Ph. D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1965.

Epp, Reuben. *The Story of Low German and Plautdietsch*. Hillsboro, KS, 1993.

Fahlbusch, Michael. *Wissenschaft im Dienst der nationalsozialistischen Politik?* Baden-Baden, 1999.

Fedotov, Goerge P. *The Russian Religious Mind*. Cambridge, MA, 1946.

Figes, Orlando. *A People's Tragedy: A History of the Russian Revolution*. New York, 1994.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*. New York, 2002.

Fisher, H. H. *Out of My Past: The Memoirs of Count Kokhovstov*. Stanford, CA, 1935.

- Freeze, Gregory L. *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Crisis, Reform, Counter-Reform*. Princeton, 1983.
- Friedmann, Robert. *Mennonite Piety through the Centuries: Its Genius and Its Literature*. Goshen, IN, 1949.
- Friesen, Abraham. *Reformation and Utopia: The Marxist Interpretation of the Reformation and its Antecedents*. Wiesbaden, 1974.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Thomas Muentzer, A Destroyer of the Godless*. Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *History and Renewal in the Anabaptist/Mennonite Tradition*. North Newton, KS, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Erasmus, the Anabaptists, and the Great Commission*. Grand Rapids, 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *P. M. Friesen and His History*. Winnipeg, 1978.
- Friesen, Peter Martin. *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia (1789-1910)*. Winnipeg, 1978.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sekte oder Konfession*. Halbstadt, 1914.
- Freund, Gerald. *Unholy Alliance: Russian-German Relations from the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk to the Treaty of Berlin*. New York, 1957.
- Fülöp-Miller, René. *Rasputin, the Holy Devil*. New York, 1928.
- Gedenkschrift zum 400 Jährigen Jubiläum der Mennoniten oder Taufgesinnten, 1525-1925*. Ludwigshafen, 1925.
- Geifman, Anna. ed. *Russia under the Tsars: Opposition and Subversion 1894-1917*. Oxford, 1999.
- Geraci, Robert P. & Khodorkovsky, Michael, eds. *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia*. Ithaca & London, 2001.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia*. Ithaca, 2001.

- Geyl, Peter. *The Revolt of the Netherlands 1555-1609*. London, 1932.
- Giesinger, Adam. *From Catherine to Khrushchev. The Story of Russia's Germans*. Battleford, SK. 1974.
- Gilliard, Pierre. *Thirteen Years at the Russian Court*. New York, 1970.
- Goertz, Hans- Jürgen, ed. *Umstrittenes Täufertum 1525-1975, Neue Forschungen*. Goettingen, 1975.
- Golder, Frank Alfred, ed. *Documents of Russian History 1914-1817*. Gloucester, MA, 1964.
- Goldstein, Robert Justin, ed. *The War for the Public Mind: Political Censorship in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Westport, Conn., 2000.
- Gooch, G. P. *Frederick the Great: the Ruler, the Writer, the Man*. New York, 1990.
- Gronsky, Paul P. *The War and the Russian Government*. New York, 1973.
- Gunther, Otto, ed. *Des Syndicus der Stadt Danzig Gott-fried Lengnich Ius Publicum Civitatis Gedanensis oder der Stadt Danzig Verfassung und Rechte*. Danzig, 1900.
- Gutsche, Waldemar. *Westliche Quellen des russischen Stundismus*. Kassel, 1956.
- Haley, K. H. D. *The Dutch in the Seventeenth Century*. London, 1972.
- Hare, Richard. *Portraits of Russian Personalities Between Reform and Revolution*. London, 1959.
- Harcrave, Sidney, trans. & ed. *The Memoirs of Count Witte*. New York, 1990.
- Harms, John F. *Geschichte der Mennoniten Brüdergemeinde*. Hillsboro, KS, 1926.
- Haskings, Geoffrey A. *The Russian Constitutional Experiment: Government and Duma, 1907-1914*. Cambridge, MA, 1973.
- Heard, Alfred F. *The Russian Church and Russian Dissent*. New York, 1887.



- Heier, Edmund. *Religious Schism in the Russian Aristocracy 1860-1900: Radstockism and Pashkovism*. The Hague, 1970.
- Hildebrand, Peter. *Erste Auswanderung der Mennoniten aus dem danziger Gebiet nach Südrussland*. Halbstadt, 1888.
- Hitler, Adolf. *Mein Kampf*. Munich, 1938.
- Horsch, John. *Menno Simons: His Life, Labors, and Teachings*. Scottdale, PA, 1916.
- Huizinga, Johan. *Dutch Civilization in the Seventeenth Century and Other Essays*. New York, 1968.
- Hunczak, Taras, ed. *The Ukraine, 1917-1921: A Study in Revolution*. Cambridge, MA, 1977.
- Hylkema, T. O. *De Geschiedenis van De Doppsgezinde Gemeenten in Russland in de oorlogs-en revolutiejaren 1914 tot 1920*. Steenwijk, 1921.
- Ipatov, A. N. *Wer sind die Mennoniten?* Alma-Ata, 1977.
- Janzen, Jacob H. *Lifting the Veil: Mennonite Life in Russia before the Revolution*, trans. Walter Klaassen. Kitchener, 1998.
- Kahle, Wilhelm. *Evangelische Christen in Russland und der Sowetunion*. Wuppertal & Kassel, 1978.
- Kamen, Henry. *Philip of Spain*. New Haven & London, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Duke of Alba*. New Haven & London, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Spanish Inquisition, A Historical Revision*. New Haven & London, 1998.
- Keller, Ludwig. *Die Reformation und die älteren Reformparteien*. Leipzig, 1885.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Hans Denck: Ein Apostel der Wiedertäufer*. Leipzig, 1882.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Geschichte der Wiedertäufer und ihres Reiches zu Münster*. Münster, 1880.

- Kershaw, Ian. *Hitler*, 2 vols. New York & London, 1998.
- Kivelson, Valerie A. & Greene, Robert H., eds. *Orthodox Russia: Belief and Practice under the Tsars*. University Park, PA, 2003.
- Klaassen, Martin. *Geschichte der wehrlosen Taufgesinnten Gemeinden von den Zeiten der Apostel bis auf die Gegenwart*. Danzig, 1873.
- Klassen, Peter G. *A Homeland for Strangers. An Introduction to Mennonites in Poland and Prussia*. Fresno, 1989.
- Klassen, Peter P. *Die Mennoniten in Paraguay*, 2 vols. Bolanden/Weierhof, 1991 & 2001.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Die Deutsch-Völkische Zeit in der Kolonie Fernheim, Chaco, Paraguay 1933-1945*. Bolanden/Weierhof, 1990.
- Klaus, A. *Unsere Kolonien. Studien und Materialien zur Geschichte und Statistik der ausländischen Kolonien in Russland*. Odessa, 1887.
- Klibanov, A. I. *History of Religious Sectarianism in Russia (1860-1917)*. Oxford, 1982.
- Klimenko, Michael. *Anfänge des Baptismus in Südrussland (Ukraine) nach offiziellen Quellen*. Erlangen, 1957.
- Koch, Fred C. *The Volga Germans in Russia and the Americas, from 1763 to the Present*. University Park & London, 1977.
- Kolinsky, Eva & van der Will, Wilfried, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Modern German Culture*. Cambridge, 1998.
- Krahn, Cornelius. *Dutch Anabaptism: Origin, Spread, Life and Thought (1450-1600)*. The Hague, 1968.
- Kroeker, Anna & Maria. *Ein Reiches Leben*. Wüstenrot, 1949.
- Kühler, W. J. *Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Doopsgezinden in de zestiende eeuw*, 3 vols. Haarlem, 1932-1950.
- Kurowski, Franz. *Die Friesen, Em Volk am Meer*. Berg/Starnberger See, 1987.

- Kurz, J. H. *Abriss der Kirchengeschichte. Ein Leitfaden für den Unterricht in höheren Lehranstalten*. Leipzig, 1892.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Church History*, trans. John Macpherson. London, 1892.
- Laqueur, Walter. *Russia and Germany, A Century of Conflict*. Boston & Toronto, 1965.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Black Hundred: The Rise of the Extreme Right in Russia*. New York, 1959.
- Latimer, R. S. *Under Three Tsars: Liberty of Conscience in Russia*. London, 1901.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Dr. Baedeker and His Apostolic Work in Russia*. London, 1908.
- Leatherbarrow, W. J. L. & Offord, D. C. eds. *A Documentary History of Russian Thought. From the Enlightenment to Marxism*. Ann Arbor, 1987.
- Lehmann, Joseph. *Geschichte der deutschen Baptisten*, 2 vols. Hamburg, 1896.
- Leroy-Beaulieu, Anatole. *The Empire of the Tsars and the Russians*, Part III: *The Religion*. New York & London, 1902.
- Lichti, Diether Goetz. *Mennoniten im Dritten Reich: Dokumentation und Deutung*. Weierhof, 1977.
- Lincoln, W. Bruce. *In the Vanguard of Reform: Russia's Enlightened Bureaucrats 1825-1861*. Dekalb, 1982.
- Lindemann, Karl. *Von den deutschen Kolonisten in Russland. Ergebnisse einer Studienreise, 1919-1921*. Stuttgart, 1924.
- Loewen, Harry, ed. *Shepherds, Servants and Prophets: Leadership among the Russian Mennonites (ca.1880-1960)*. Kitchener, 2003.
- Loewen, Heinrich. *Russische Freikirche: Die Geschichte der Evangelium-schristen und Baptisten bis 1944*. Bonn, 1995.
- Lohr, Eric. *Nationalizing the Russian Empire: The Campaign against Enemy Aliens during World War I*. Cambridge, MA, 2003.

- Long, James W. *From Privileged to Dispossessed. The Volga Germans, 1860-1917*. Lincoln & London, 1988.
- Ludendorff, General. *My War Memoirs, 1914-1918*. London, n.d.
- Lupinin, Nicholas. *Religious Revolt in the XVIIIth Century: The Schism of the Russian Church*. Princeton, 1984.
- Malet, Michael. *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War*. London, 1982.
- Mannhardt, Jakob. *Die Wehrfreiheit der Altpreuussischen Mennoniten: Eine Geschichtliche Erörterung*. Marienburg, 1863.
- Mannhardt, H. G. *Die Danziger Mennonitengemeinde: Ihre Entstehung und ihre Geschichte von 1569-1919*. Danzig, 1919.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Menno Simons, 100 Jährige Geburtstagsfeier den 6. November, 1892*. Danzig, 1892.
- Martin, Terry. *The Affirmative Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*. Ithaca & London, 2001.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Mennonites and the Russian Duma 1905-1914*. Seattle, 1996.
- Maser, Werner. *Hitler's Mein Kampf: Entstehung, Aufbau, Stil, Änderungen, Quellen, Quellenwert, kommentierte Auszüge*. Munich, 1966.
- Mehlinger, Howard D. & Thompson, John M. *Count Witte and the Tsarist Government in the 1905 Revolution*. Bloomington, 1972.
- Meissner, B., Neubauer, H., & Eisfeld, A. *Die Russland Deutschen, Gestern and Heute*. Cologne, 1992.
- Melle, Otto. *50 Jahre Blankenburger Konferenz*. Bad Blankenburg, 1936.
- Michels, George Bernhard. *At War with the Church: Religious Dissent in Seventeenth-Century Russia*. Stanford, CA, 1999.
- Milukov, Paul. *Political Memories 1905-1917*. Ann Arbor, 1967.
- Mommsen, Hans. *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy*, trans. Elborg Forster & Larry Eugene Jones. Chapel Hill & London, 1996.

- Monas, Sidney. *The Third Section: Police and Society in Russia under Nicholas I.* Cambridge, MA, 1961.
- Motley, John Lathrop. *The Rise of the Dutch Republic*, 3 vols. Philadelphia, nd.
- Müller, J. P. *Die Mennoniten in Ostfriesland vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert.* Amsterdam, 1887.
- Murray, John J. *Amsterdam in the Age of Rembrandt.* Norman, OK, 1967.
- Neufeld, Dietrich. *A Russian Dance of Death: Revolution and Civil War in the Ukraine*, trans. & ed. Al Reimer. Winnipeg, 1977.
- Netanjahu, B. *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth-Century Spain.* New York, 1995.
- Orlovsky, Daniel T. *The Limits of Reform: The Ministry of Internal Affairs in Imperial Russia, 1802-1881.* Cambridge, MA, 1981.
- Palij, Michael. *The Anarchism of Nesto Makhno, 1918-1 921: An Aspect of the Ukrainian Revolution.* Seattle & London, 1976.
- Pares, Bernard, ed. *Letters of the Tsaritsa to the Tsar 1914-1916.* London, 1923.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Fall of the Russian Monarchy.* London, 1939.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *My Russian Memoirs.* New York, 1969.
- Parker, Geoffrey. *The Grand Strategy of Philip H.* New Haven & London, 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Dutch Revolt.* Harmondsworth, 1985.
- Penner, Horst. *Ansiedlungen mennonitischer Niederländer im Weichselmündungsgebiet der Mitte des 16. Jahrhunderts bis zum Beginn der preussischen Zeit.* Weierhof, 1940.
- Postma, Sjouke. *Das niederländische Erbe der preussisch-russländischen Mennoniten in Europe, Asien und Amerika.* Leeuwarden, 1959.

- Prochanov, I. S. *In the Cauldron of Russia, 1859-1933*. New York, 1933.
- Radkey, Oliver Hemy. *The Election to the Constituent Assembly of 1917*. Cambridge, MA, 1950.
- Radzinsky, Edward. *The Rasputin File*. New York, 2000.
- Rauschenbusch, A. *Die Entstehung der Kindertaufe im dritten Jahrhundert n. Chr. Und die Wiedereinführung der biblischen Taufe*. Hamburg, 1898.
- Read, Christopher. *Religion, Revolution and the Russian Intelligentsia 1900-1912*. London, 1979.
- Redekop, Calvin Wall & Steiner, Samuel J., eds. *Mennonite Identity: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*. London & New York, 1988.
- Remmick, David. *Lenin's Tomb: The Last Days of the Soviet Empire*. New York, 1993.
- Rempel, David G. *A Mennonite Family in Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, 1789-1923*. Toronto, 2002.
- Renntisch, Karl. *Christoph Friedrich Spittler: Sein Werk und Leben*. Metzingen, 1987.
- Riesenberg, Peter. *Citizenship in the Western Tradition: Plato to Rousseau*. Chapel Hill, 1992.
- Robson, Roy R. *Old Believers in Modern Russia*. Dekalb, 1995.
- Roosen, Karl Berend. *Menno Symons den Mennoniten Gemeinden geschildert*. Milford Square, PA, 1874.
- Sanborn, Joshua A. *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics, 1905-1925*. Dekalb, 2003.
- Sazonov, Serge. *Fateful Years 1909-1916*. London, 1928.
- Schroeder, H. H. *Russlanddeutsche Friesen*. Döllstadt-Langensalza, 1936.
- Schumacher, Bruno. *Niederländische Ansiedlungen im Herzogtum Preussen zur Zeit Herzog Albrechts (1525-1568)*. Leipzig, 1903.

- Seebass, Friedrich. *Johann Christoph Blumhardt. Sein Leben und Wirken, Mit einer Auswahl seiner Schriften*. Hamburg, 1949.
- Specter, Ivan & Marion, eds. *Readings in Russian History and Culture*. Palo Alto, CA, 1968.
- Steeves, Paul D. "The Russian Baptist Union, 1917-1935: Evangelical Awakening in Russia." Ph. D. dissertation, University of Kansas, 1976.
- Szper, Felicia. *Nederlandsche Nederzettingen in West-Pruisen Gedurende den Poolschen Tijd*. Enkhuizen, 1913.
- Thaden, Edward C. *Russia's Western Borderlands, 1710-1870*. Princeton, 1984.
- Thiesen, John D. *Mennonite & Nazi? Attitudes Among Mennonite Colonists in Latin America, 1933-1945*. Kitchener, ON. 1999.
- Thiessen, Frank C. *P. M. Friesen, 1849-1914*. Winnipeg, 1974.
- Thompson, John M. *A Vision Unfulfilled: Russia and the Soviet Union in the Twentieth Century*. Lexington, MA, 1996.
- Toews, John B. *The Mennonites in Russia from 1917 to 1930: Selected Documents*. Winnipeg, 1975.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. *The Story of the Early Mennonite Brethren (1860-1869): Reflections of a Lutheran Churchman*. Winnipeg & Hillsboro, 2002.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Lost Fatherland: The Story of the Mennonite Emigration from Soviet Russia, 1921-1927*. Scottdale, PA, 1967.
- Toews, Paul, ed. *Mennonites and Baptists: A Continuing Conversation*. Winnipeg & Hillsboro, 1993.
- Tschackert, Paul, ed. *Urkundenbuch zur Reformationsgeschichte des Herzogtums Preussen*, 3 vols. Osnabrück, 1965.
- Tschizenwsky, Dmitrij. *Russian Intellectual History*. Ann Arbor, 1978.
- Unruh, A. H. *Die Geschichte der Mennoniten Brüdergemeinde*. Winnipeg, 1954.

- Unruh, Benjamin H. *Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen im 16., 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*. Karlsruhe, 1955.
- Urry, James. *None but Saints: The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia 1789-1889*. Winnipeg, 1989.
- Van Braght, Thieleman Janz. *Het bloedig Toonel der Doops-gezinde, en Weerlose Christenen*. Dordrecht, 1660.
- Vassili, Count Paul. *Confessions of a Czarina*. New York, 1918.
- Verheyden, A. L. E. *Anabaptism in Flanders 1530-1659: A Century of Struggle*. Scottdale, PA, 1961.
- Vos, Karel. *Menno Simons, 1496-1561. Zijn leven en werken en zijn reformatorische denkbelden*. Leiden, 1914.
- Walicki, Andrzej. *The Slavophile Controversy*. Oxford, 1975.
- Walkin, Jacob. *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia. Political and Social Institutions Under the Last Three Czars*. New York, 1962.
- Walsh, Warren Bartlett. *Russia and the Soviet Union. A Modern History*. Ann Arbor, 1958.
- Warth, Robert D. *Nicholas II: The Life and Reign of Russia's Last Monarch*. Westport, Conn., 1999.
- Walzer, Michael. *On Toleration*. New York & London, 1997.
- Weber, Eugene. *Peasants into Frenchmen, The Modernization of Rural France 1870-1914*. Stanford, CA, 1976.
- Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons. New York, 1958.
- Wedel, C. H. *Abriss der Geschichte der Mennoniten*, 4 vols. Newton, KS, 1901.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Kurzgefasste Kirchengeschichte für Schüler and Familien*. Newton, KS, 1905.



- \_\_\_\_\_. *Bilder aus der Kirchengeschichte für mennonitische Gemeindegemeinschaften*. Newton, KS, 1904.
- Wedgwood, C. V. *William the Silent*. New York, n.d.
- Weeks, Theodore R. *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863-1914*. Dekalb, 1996,
- Werth, Paul W. *At the Margins of Orthodoxy: Missions, Governance, and Confessional Politics in Russia's Volga-Kama Region*. Ithaca & London, 2002.
- Wheeler-Bennett, John W. *The Nemesis of Power. The German Army in Politics 1918-1945*. London, 1953.
- Williams, George H. & Mergal, Angel M., eds. *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*. Philadelphia, 1957.
- Wilson, Charles. *The Dutch Republic*. New York & Toronto, 1968.
- Wilson, Cohn. *Rasputin and the Fall of the Romanovs*. New York, 1964.
- Wittram, Reinhard. *Peter I Czar und Kaiser: Zur Geschichte Peters des Grossen in seiner Zeit*. Goettingen, 1964.
- Wolkonsky, Prince Serge. *My Reminiscences*, vol. II. London, 1924.
- Wrangel, Alexis. *General Wrangel, Russia's White Crusader*. New York, 1987.
- Zernov, Nicolas. *The Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century*. New York, 1963.
- Zhuk, Sergei I. *Russia's Lost Reformation: Peasants, Millenialism, and Radical Sects in Southern Russia and Ukraine, 1830-1917*. Washington & Baltimore, 2004.
- Zuckerman, Frederic S. *The Tsarist Secret Police in Russian Society, 1880-1917*. New York, 1996.



# Index

- Alba, Duke of: 3, 292, 340, 341.  
 Alexander I: 8, 94.  
 Alexander II: 118-119, 197.  
 Alexander III (1881-1894): 119  
 Anabaptists: 48, 52-53, 56, 59, 63, 66,  
     68, 70, 72, 78, 81, 84-85, 111, 114,  
     159-160, 162, 222, 297, 300, 305,  
     316, 318, 337-338, 340-342, 345-349,  
     352-355, 358, 360, 363, 369, 372.  
 Anabaptist/Mennonite Distinctives: 114-  
     115, 301, 315-316.  
 Anabaptist Origins, Theory of: 53-56, 61-  
     62, 64, 69, 71, 73, 84, 86, 114.  
 April 1905 Manifesto: 9, 47, 90-100, 121,  
     123, 128-129, 134, 142, 157, 171,  
     181, 185, 205.  
 Arnold, Gottfried: 68.  
 Asher, Abraham: 142.  
 Assimilation: 5, 110, 201, 203-204, 224-  
     225, 259, 262, 265-267, 343-344, 360,  
     372.  
 Augustine of Hippo: 160, 182.  
 Auhagen, Otto: 308-309, 312.  
 Baedeker, Dr: 107, 116, 120, 125.  
 Balkan Crisis: 194, 199.  
 Barmen Missions School: 57-59, 102,  
     160, 162, 362-363.  
 Basel Missions School: 57, 59, 102, 107,  
     362-363.  
 Beck, Tobias: 58.  
 Bergmann, Cornelius: 83-84, 192-193,  
     203, 303-305, 338.  
 Bergmann, H. A: 47-48, 82, 130-135,  
     173-174, 207, 217, 230-233, 238, 244,  
     255.  
 Blount, Richard: 158-159.  
 Boers (Boer War): 198-199, 214, 250,  
     273, 277, 285, 365, 367.  
 Bondar, I. S: 21-22, 25, 142, 144, 151,  
     182, 224, 343-344.  
 Bonekemper, Johann: 102.  
 Braun, Abraham: 121, 146, 277, 301,  
     317.  
 Braun, Heinrich J: 18, 20, 25-27, 40, 44,  
     46, 52, 54-56, 60-81, 100, 107, 111,  
     114, 116, 121, 123, 125-127, 133,  
     137, 142-153, 157-160, 163-167, 169-  
     172, 174, 179-181, 183-184, 188, 191,  
     198, 209, 212, 214-216, 218-219, 232-  
     233, 237, 239-246, 248-251, 255, 258,  
     272-273, 275-276, 282, 290, 292-297,  
     299, 306-307, 324-325, 330, 338, 365.  
 Braun, Peter J: ix, 14, 19-20, 22-23, 25-  
     27, 29-34, 45-48, 52, 59, 61, 76-77,  
     80-83, 85-86, 99-100, 103, 108, 142,  
     147, 158-159, 169, 179, 184, 186,  
     191-193, 197-198, 203, 211-212, 218-  
     225, 229-230, 241-243, 246, 253, 255-  
     258, 262, 267, 271-172, 275-279, 282,  
     287-288, 290-293, 298, 300-301, 309,  
     313, 316-322, 325, 337-338, 341, 343-  
     344, 364-365, 367-368.  
 Braun, Jacob: 272.  
 Breyfogle, Nicholas: 94.  
 British and Foreign Bible Society: 101.  
 Broadbent, E. H: 60, 116, 120.  
 Brons, Anna: 43, 305.  
 Brons, Bernard: 54.  
 Brothers of the Common Life: 84, 337.  
 Brown, J. Newton: 68.  
 Bulgakov, Sergius: 95.  
 Burckhardt, Paul: 53.  
 Callistus, Pope: 160.  
 Cate, C. M. ten: 274, 303.  
 Catherine II (the Great): 3-4, 8-9, 76, 92-  
     93, 125, 177, 196, 202, 206-207, 213,  
     225, 227, 234, 286, 359.  
 Central Powers, The: 278.  
 Censorship (Military):  
     Charles V: 222, 339-340.  
 CHEKA, The: 12, 255, 319.  
 Chortitza (Old Colony): 30, 218-219,  
     241, 253, 264.  
 Claassen, Johann: 101, 109.  
 Closed Settlements (the Mennonite  
     ideal): 10-11, 201-203, 295, 263, 325.  
 Communist Revolution (October Revolu-  
     tion): 12, 45, 255, 275, 317.  
 Cornies, Johann: 30, 34-36, 41-42, 47,  
     314.  
 Constitutional Democratic Party (Kadets):  
     124, 127.  
 Council of Ministers: 21, 23, 90-91, 94,  
     122, 142, 157, 193, 212, 217, 236-  
     238, 246, 348.  
 Cramer, Samuel: 76-77, 79, 176.  
 Cramp, J. M: 60-61.  
**Das Deutschtum**: xi, 23, 195, 199, 273,  
     276, 279, 290, 292-293, 297-298, 300,  
     313, 315-316, 320, 324-325, 368, 371.  
 Decembrist Revolt, 1825: 93, 102.  
 Deknatel, Johannes: 71, 356.

- Denck, Hans: 54, 71-72, 78, 81, 366.  
 Department of Religious Affairs: 47, 89, 128, 133-135, 137, 139, 149, 171, 183, 227.  
**Der Bote**: 20-21, 23.  
**Der Botschafter**: 17, 33-34, 36, 38, 40, 43-45, 80, 83, 100, 131, 148-150, 158, 165, 166, 171, 179-180, 186-188, 199, 208, 215.  
 Dick, David J: 146.  
 Dirks, Heinrich, Jr: 58-59.  
 Dirks, Heinrich, Sr. (Bishop): 40, 58-59, 61, 160-163, 362.  
 Dobrovolsky (Minister of Justice): 238, 246-248.  
**Doopsgezinde**: 70, 329, 365.  
 Dyck, Arnold: 30.  
 Dyck, Bishop Isaak: 133.  
 Dyck, Peter J: 328-239.  
 Duma, The Russian: 4, 48, 74, 76, 90, 121-123, 127-132, 135-137, 142, 150, 172-175, 177-179, 188, 213, 217-218, 226, 233, 244, 254, 273.  
 Dukhobors: 94, 105, 237.  
 Durnovo, P. N: 122, 181, 193.  
 Dutch Origins Theory (Dutch Argument): 20, 26, 191, 213-215, 219, 221, 230-232, 240, 244, 250-251, 272-274, 281-283, 285-286, 290-291, 293, 298, 306, 313, 320, 322, 333, 337, 367.  
**Ecclesiastical Regulations**: 90-91.  
 Eck, John: 348.  
 Ediger, H. A: 48, 171.  
 Ediger, Theodor: 34, 38-43, 46, 83.  
 Ehrt, Adolf: 85, 205.  
 Engels, Friedrich: 326.  
 Epp, David H: 10, 17, 20-21, 29-31, 33-34, 37-40, 44-48, 51-56, 61, 69-74, 76, 80, 82, 86, 99-100, 114, 131-133, 137-139, 147, 151, 158, 160, 163-164, 166-170, 172-174, 178-181, 184, 187, 215-216, 218-219, 230-232, 238, 244, 255, 317, 320, 364, 366.  
 Epp, Heinrich: 212.  
 Ewert, Jacob: 36.  
 Fabri, Friedrich: 57-59, 160, 162, 362.  
 Fast, Alexander: 289, 299, 301, 324.  
 Fetzer, J. G: 55-56, 159.  
 Figes, Orlando: vii, 64, 129, 278.  
**Forstei** (Forestry Service): 110, 250.  
 Franck, Sebastian: 352.  
 Freeze, G. L: 91.  
 Frederick the Great: 3, 323, 358-359, 368.  
 Frederick Wm. II: 3, 359.  
 French Revolution: viii, 3-5, 7, 12, 64, 67, 93, 260-261, 273, 360.  
**Friedenstimme**: 25, 33, 40, 56, 80, 122, 125, 127, 129, 132-133, 135, 141, 146, 149-150, 157, 165-167, 170-172, 199, 214.  
 Friesen, A. A: x, 14, 192, 195, 201, 201-204, 209, 245, 252-254, 256, 259-267, 276, 280-284, 286, 289-290, 326, 372.  
 Friesen, P. M: 29, 31-32, 34, 43-44, 48, 58-59, 61-64, 74, 82, 96, 100, 107, 113-114, 123, 125, 130, 133-134, 137, 139, 179-181, 183, 185-186, 214-215, 219, 305, 320, 334, 363, 365.  
 Frizen Party: 124, 130.  
 General Conference, Berdiansk 1911: 37.  
 General Conference, Lichtenau 1918: 317.  
 General Conference, Neuhaubstadt 1917: 31, 45, 51, 222, 316.  
 General Conference, Nikolaipol 1912: 38, 41, 47-48, 76.  
 General Conference, Rudnerweide 1913: 42, 44, 178.  
 German Baptists: 9, 60, 101-104, 106-109, 118, 131, 158-159, 163-164, 362-363.  
 German Baptist Confession of Faith: 110-111.  
 Gnadenfeld Colony: 57-59, 102.  
 Goertz, Abraham: 47, 61, 130, 133-134, 172, 197.  
 Goertz, Hans-Jürgen: 347, 349.  
 Golitsyn, Count: 247-248.  
 Grant, Michael: 353.  
 Great Commission, The: 114-115, 120, 130-131, 166, 185-186.  
 Great Reforms, The: 64, 196.  
 Grebel, Conrad: 201, 261, 263, 266, 350-353.  
 Guardian Committee: 8, 89, 93, 161, 206.  
 Gutschke, Waldemar: 102, 106.  
 Haake, Gerhard ("Haake Affair"): 53, 78.  
 Harder, Bishop Johann: 101.  
 Hamburg Baptist Seminary: 54-55, 57, 60, 107, 111, 116, 123, 159, 170, 293, 363.

- Harms, John F: 112.  
Harnack, Adolf von: 76, 84-85, 176.  
Hege, Christian: 43.  
Hege, Christine: 36, 43.  
Heier, Edmund: 105, 116.  
**Herkunftsfrage**: 292, 323, 325-326, 336, 339.  
Hildebrand, J. J: 292.  
Hindenburg, Oscar: 281, 310-313.  
Hitler, Adolf: 298-299, 301-302, 314-315, 319, 321-324, 328, 345, 347.  
Hoffman, Melchior: 71, 78, 337.  
Hooge, P: 40.  
Horsch, John: 43, 80, 274, 315, 333.  
Huebert, Johann: 58.  
Huizinga, Johan: 346.  
**Hüpfer** (Jumpers): 62, 108, 364.  
Hylkema, T. O: 329-330, 333.  
Imperial Edict, 1529:  
Isaak, D. P: 18, 126, 149.  
Ipatov, A. N: 98, 343-344, 354.  
Ivan the Terrible: 3.  
Jack, Walter: 150.  
Jan van Leiden: 71-72, 81, 346.  
Janz, B. B: 85, 193, 201, 240, 243-244, 258, 263, 279, 285-289, 291, 295, 315, 318, 328, 333, 336, 370.  
Janzen, Jacob H: vii, ix, 14, 31, 103, 169, 186, 238-239, 293, 300, 313-314, 317, 318.  
Jung, Privy Counselor: 289-290.  
Kargell, I. V: 120.  
Keller, Ludwig: 10, 12, 15, 32, 34, 43-44, 48-49, 51-57, 60-62, 66, 69-71, 74-80, 82-86, 95-96, 99, 114, 116, 134, 137-139, 176, 199, 222, 274, 322, 337, 355, 363-366, 369.  
Kamensky, P. W: 136, 173-175.  
Kiesing, Mr. L: 284.  
Kharusin, A: 135-136, 142, 151, 173, 257.  
Khutors: 11, 208.  
Khvostov, A. A: 236-237.  
Klaassen, Martin: 7-8, 66-69, 71, 355.  
Klassen, Abraham: 46, 59, 172, 179.  
Klassen, C. F: 328-330, 335.  
Klassen, David J: 212.  
Klassen, Johann: 36, 40.  
Klassen, Peter J: 359-360.  
Klaus, Alexander: 7-8, 35, 62, 64-66, 71-72, 82, 108-109, 178, 332, 364.  
Klibanov, A. I: 123.  
Klippenstein, Lawrence: 212.  
Köhler, Walter: 78-79.  
**Kommission für kirchliche Angelegenheiten (KfK)**: vii, ix, 17-18, 47-48, 61, 76, 100, 142, 172-175, 184, 188, 24, 218-219, 242.  
Krahn, Cornelius: 301, 331-335.  
Kroeker, Abraham J: 25, 126-127, 129, 146-147, 165, 167, 169-170, 181, 214-215, 273.  
Kroeker, Jacob: 107, 116, 121, 123, 125-127, 149-150, 214.  
**Kto takie Mennonity**: 17-23, 27, 31-32, 76, 82, 99, 108, 191, 198, 218-220, 222, 229, 276, 290, 293, 298, 322, 333, 365.  
Kuiper, Dr: 284.  
Kurtz, Johann Heinrich: 56.  
Land Liquidation Law of February 1915: 12, 14, 21, 23-24, 195, 201, 217-218, 221, 226, 228, 251, 255, 273.  
Land Liquidation Law of December 1915: 12, 14, 21, 23-24, 201, 232-233, 237, 251, 255.  
Land Liquidation Law of February 1917: 239, 251.  
Lehmann, Joseph: 55-56, 60, 111-113.  
Lenzmann, Hermann: 58.  
Leroy-Beaulieu, Anatole: 95, 117, 120.  
Leyden, Jan van: 71-72, 81, 346, 350.  
Liebig, August: 60, 103.  
Lieven, Princess: 104, 116, 171.  
Lindemann, Karl: 25-26, 85, 214, 232-234, 239-242, 249-250, 253, 255, 275, 299, 325.  
Loder, Mr: 284-285, 367.  
Lohr, Eric: 191, 199, 209, 262.  
Ludendorf, General Erich: 281.  
Luther, Martin: 36, 56, 65, 84, 117, 352-355.  
Mannhardt, H. G: 36, 304-305, 338.  
Mannhardt, Wilhelm: 5-6, 67, 73-74, 305, 334, 360.  
Makhno, Nestor: 12, 255-256, 277-278, 281-282, 288, 293, 306, 319-320.  
Margaritov, S: 143-144, 148, 151.  
Martin, Terry: 123-124, 206-207.  
**Martyrs Mirror**: 66, 72, 355-351, 354.  
Mattys, Jan: 71-72, 346.  
Menkin, E. V: 226.

- Mennonite Brethren Confession of Faith, 1902: 113-117, 124.
- Mennonite Central Committee (MCC): 327, 329-331, 334-335.
- Mennonitische Blätter**: 53-54, 77-80, 85, 112, 161, 170, 273, 305, 311, 316, 321.
- Mennonitische Rundschau**: 25, 141, 243, 273, 294, 296, 314.
- Mennozentrum**: 279-280, 282, 291.
- Mercantilist Economic Policies: 4, 206, 267, 356.
- Military Exemption: 5, 10, 22, 29, 47, 68, 76, 129-130, 132, 202-203, 207, 225, 234, 236, 239, 254, 360-361, 364.
- Millenarian Expectations: 69.
- Miller, Orie: 285.
- Military Censorship Committee: 220-221.
- Ministry of Internal Affairs: 8, 47, 74-75, 89, 111, 118, 122, 130, 135, 142, 151, 154, 156, 181, 226, 233-234, 236.
- Ministry of State Domains: 7, 64, 93.
- Molokans: 94, 104-105, 117, 151, 153, 155.
- Molokan Seminary in Astrakhanka: 145, 150-151, 156.
- Molotschna Colony: 152-153, 241, 253, 258, 277.
- Molotschna Teachers' Association: 37-38, 40.
- Motley, John Lathrop: 354.
- Mumaw, Levi: 281, 294.
- Münsterites (Münster Revolution): 6, 52, 64, 66, 68, 71-72, 74, 77-80, 82, 176, 222, 237, 343, 346-347, 350, 352-354, 364, 366, 371.
- Müntzer, Thomas: 62-68, 77, 80-82, 84, 178, 347, 349-353, 371.
- Muraviev, M. N.: 196.
- Neff, Christian: 35, 43, 283, 312.
- Neufeld, Dietrich: 306-307.
- Neufeld, Wilhelm: 58.
- Neuhalbstadt Consultation of April 1914: 100, 179.
- New Russia: 11, 30, 196.
- Nicholas I: 8, 93.
- Nicholas II (1894-1917): 90, 98, 121, 142, 217, 226, 241, 251, 272, 306.
- Nickel, Gerhard: 58.
- Nonresistance: 5-6, 14, 66, 68, 70, 73-74, 76, 110, 114-115, 160, 177, 222-223, 259, 261, 264, 267, 273, 279, 282, 287, 300-301, 315-319, 360-361, 368.
- Novoe Vremia**: 128, 172, 214, 239.
- October 1905 Manifesto: 9, 33, 90, 100, 121, 123, 126-127, 129, 132, 134, 142, 149, 157, 199, 217, 226, 254.
- Old Believers: 98, 132.
- Old Colony Mennonites: 26, 30-31, 54, 212, 264-265, 306.
- Oldenbourg, Countess Anna of: 355.
- Oncken, J. G.: 56, 60, 103, 106, 108, 117, 119, 164.
- Ostermann, A., Count: 230-231.
- Over Procurator: 90-91, 95, 97-98, 109, 115, 118.
- Pan Salvism: 10, 192, 204, 207.
- Parable of the Shrewd Steward: 4-13, 194, 249.
- Parable of the Tares: 59, 160-161, 182.
- Pares, Bernard: 129, 246.
- Partitions of Poland: 227-229, 231, 286, 320, 323, 334, 343-344, 358-360.
- Pashkov, V. A.: 104-105.
- Pashkovites (Evangelical Christians): 90, 98, 104, 106-107, 115-117, 120, 123-125, 127-128, 146, 151, 153, 165-167, 170, 183-184, 205.
- Paul I: 4, 8, 9, 74, 76, 109, 175, 206, 227, 234.
- Pavlov, Nikolai Ivanovich: 136-137, 142-143, 147, 149-154, 183, 204.
- Pavlov, Vassily: 117.
- Penner, Horst: 330, 336, 338.
- Penner, Peter J.: 179.
- Peter the Great: vii, 90, 92-93, 207.
- Philadelphia Society: 146.
- Philip II: 222, 339.
- Philips, Dirk: 81, 346, 352.
- Philips, Obbe: 346, 351-352.
- Pietism: 57, 59, 344, 356, 361-363.
- Pisarevsky, G. G.: 224, 230-231, 343-344.
- Plattdeutsch** (Low German): 213, 223.
- Plymouth Brethren: 104.
- Pobedonostsev, K. K.: 95-96, 98-99, 104-105, 109, 113, 115, 118-120, 176, 204-205, 216, 260-261.
- Polish Uprising of 1830: viii, 93-94.
- Polygenesis Thesis: 346-349.
- Postma, J. S.: 338, 340-343, 344.

- Potemkin, Prince: 202, 225, 231, 234.  
Preamble to January 1915 Land Liquidation Law: 253, 255, 281.  
**Press Review:** 212-213, 227, 245.  
Prischib Resolutions (Conference of): 280, 290.  
**Privilegium, das grosse:** 4, 7-9, 12, 48, 74, 76, 89, 100, 109, 131, 171, 175, 177, 186, 206, 225, 234, 271.  
Prokhanov, Ivan S: 107, 116-118, 123-127, 141, 146, 153, 165, 166, 183.  
Proselytism, religious: 9, 14, 90, 93-94, 97, 99-100, 103, 118, 121, 127-128, 130, 148, 151, 153, 155-156, 164, 169, 172, 181, 205, 213, 255, 361.  
Protestant Reformation: 3, 7, 29, 37, 54, 56, 66-67, 78, 82-84, 91, 95, 116-117, 124, 204, 339, 348, 361.  
Protopopov, A. D: 237, 247.  
Public History: 29.  
Quiring, Walter: 262, 301, 321, 334.  
Rada Government, The: 278.  
Radstock, Lord: 104, 116, 118.  
Raduga Press: 18, 20, 47, 74, 100, 107, 125-127, 135, 137, 142, 145-148, 150, 152-153, 157, 165, 169-170, 180-181, 183-185, 209, 214, 220.  
Rasputin: 246, 271, 364.  
Ruaschenbusch, August: 55-56, 159.  
Regehr, Ted: 331, 325-336.  
Religious Toleration: 89-90, 92, 94, 97, 108, 119, 178.  
Rembrandt van Rijn: 358.  
Rempel, David G: 13, 18, 20-21, 30, 62, 64, 67, 191-192, 220, 248, 250, 332-333.  
Revolution of 1848: 5.  
Roosen, B. C: 71-73.  
Rothemann, Bernard: 72, 346.  
Royse, Morton: 331, 333.  
Russian Mennonite Archive: 32, 45-46.  
Russian Nationalism: viii, 8.  
Russian Orthodox Church: 11, 68, 89-90, 93-96, 98-101, 105-107, 110, 117-121, 129, 147, 151-152, 155, 176-177, 181, 199-200, 205.  
Russification: viii, ix, 8, 12, 106, 152, 154-155, 194-201, 209.  
**Russkoye Slovo:** 213.  
Russo-Japanese War: 132, 193, 208, 216, 225.  
Sazonov, Serge: 193-194, 199.  
Schleunig, Johannes: 211, 252-253.  
Schoen, Max: 43.  
Schroeder, Heinrich H: 240, 243-244, 249-350, 262, 282, 294, 301, 306, 313-315, 322-323.  
**Schutzbrieft:** 4, 6, 355-356, 360.  
Sect/Confession Controversy: 12, 14-15, 17, 22, 47, 74, 76, 90, 100, 130, 171-172, 175, 177.  
Sect/Sectarian: 9-10, 52-53, 62, 68, 70, 79, 90, 94, 101, 108, 130, 133, 142, 144-145, 151-154, 174, 200, 204, 212, 226, 236, 274, 312, 314-315, 317-318, 321, 338, 340, 346-347, 349-354, 357, 361-362, 364, 366, 368-369, 371.  
**Selbstschutz:** 281-282, 287, 301, 315, 317, 319, 368-370.  
Simons, Menno: 3, 6, 35-36, 42, 52, 66, 68, 70-73, 75, 77, 79-82, 85, 107-108, 115, 125, 134, 138, 160, 163, 176, 178, 222, 305, 349-354, 362, 366, 368-369, 371.  
Skalweit, Martin: 117.  
Smith, C. Henry: vii, ix, 191, 303-304, 307, 333-334.  
**St. Petersburg Zeitung:** 80, 132-133, 172.  
Stauffer, Ethelbert: 345, 347, 349, 351.  
Stolypin, P. A: 142, 144-145, 149-156, 164, 181, 184, 254.  
**Studienkommission:** 192, 244, 251, 256, 259, 282-284, 286, 288-289, 293-296, 300.  
Stuermer, Boris V: 236.  
**Stundists** (Stundo-Baptists): 90, 96-98, 101-106, 115-120, 123-124, 127, 131.  
Synod, The Holy: 90-91, 97-98, 109, 118.  
Szper, Felicia: 222, 240 306, 338.  
**Taufgesinnte:** 32, 58, 66-68, 72-74, 77, 80, 82, 86, 318, 337-338, 343.  
Thiessen, Frank C: 96.  
Thiessen, Johann: 239-242, 244, 246, 248-249, 273, 290, 306, 325.  
Timashev, I: 156.  
Toews, J. B: 86.  
Toews, John B: 287.  
Trappe, George von: 225, 230-231, 359.  
Treaty of Brest-Litovsk: 278-281.  
Troeltsch, Ernst: 84.  
Tscherniavsky, Inspector: 62-63, 363-364.  
Tschizewskij, Dimitrij: 91-92.

- Tsimbal, Efim: 102-103, 117, 119.
- Unger, Abraham: 102, 106, 112, 114, 164.
- Unruh, Benjamin H: x, 18-20, 23, 26, 30, 34-36, 40-42, 44, 46-47, 83-84, 96, 170, 201, 204, 218-219, 232, 239-246, 248-257, 259-263, 266-267, 272-273, 275, 279-285, 287-292, 294-295, 297-304, 308-309, 311-313, 316, 318, 320-328, 330-331, 334-344, 359, 366-368, 371.
- Unruh, Bishop Heinrich: 44, 47, 130, 141, 146, 148, 179-180, 212.
- Urry, James: 48, 214.
- Uvarov, Serge: 93-94, 97, 105, 199.
- Valuev, Minister of Internal Affairs: 7, 73.
- Van Braght, Thieleman J: 57-58, 66, 68, 71-72, 354-355.
- Van den Vondel, Joost: 358.
- Van der Smissen, Carl H. A: 115.
- Van der Smissen, Hinrich: 77-79, 170-171, 223, 273-274, 300, 303.
- Verband Bürger Holländischer Herkunft:** 288, 333.
- Vereinshaus (Allianz Haus):** 143-154, 148-150, 153, 165-167, 171, 181.
- Verheyden, A. L. E: 340.
- Vissering, G: 284.
- Vogt, Andreas: 46.
- Volk:** 13, 262, 266, 300-301, 312-314, 320, 371.
- Völklein:** 5, 13, 260, 262, 265-267, 300, 313-314, 361, 363, 366, 370-371.
- Volkonsky, Serge: 96-97, 109.
- Volkonsky, Prince: 26, 233.
- Volksdeutsche:** 204, 325, 327, 331-332, 335.
- Volkskirche:** 68, 71.
- Waldenses: 56, 60, 66, 68, 73, 77-78, 81-83, 85-86, 176, 222, 322, 337, 354-355, 366.
- Waldo, Peter: 68, 71.
- Wardin, Albert: 109, 111, 113.
- Warkentin, C. H: 283.
- Warkentin, Dr. Heinrich: 283.
- Weber, Eugene: 109.
- Wedel, C. H: 32-34, 42, 77, 82.
- Weeks, Theodor: 196-197.
- Werth, Paul D: 89.
- Western Borderlands: 196-197, 199, 208-209, 216.
- Weydmann, Ernst: 78.
- Wiedertäufer:** 73, 77, 80-81, 338, 343.
- Wieler, Johann: 21, 26, 142, 179, 275, 288, 292.
- Wiens, B. B: 246, 271, 313, 320.
- Willms, Johann H: 21, 26, 142, 179, 275, 288, 292.
- Winkler, Immanuel: 279-282, 291.
- Winkler Plan: 279-280, 290-291.
- Witte, S. I: 94, 122, 129, 142, 193-194.
- Wüst, Eduard: 102, 106-107, 362.
- Zakarov, Duma Prerepresentative: 145, 150-151.
- Zernov, Nicolas: 95.
- Zimmermann, Wilhelm: 196-197.
- Zionsbote:** 102.
- Zhuk, Sergei I: 105, 200.
- Zuckermann, Frederic S: 122.



# IN DEFENSE OF PRIVILEGE:

## Russian Mennonites and the State before and during World War I

The transition from being a severely persecuted religious minority in the Reformation era to becoming a privileged ethnic minority in the 19th-century Russian empire makes the Dutch-Polish-Russian Mennonite story a very intriguing one. Yet the privileges granted these Mennonites by Russia in 1800—permanent exemption from military service, freedom of religion, self-government, and control of their own schools—came under attack by imperial authorities with the government's decision to implement russification policies in the 1860s. The second section of this study documents how the Mennonites fought back, resisting the government's attempt to assimilate them and to restrict their religious freedom.

When the war against Germany erupted, Mennonites were left with little support. They had largely alienated the Russian government through their opposition to its russification policies. Although Russian Mennonites were predominantly of Dutch ancestry, they had become Germanized while in Poland/Prussia and now came to be considered part of the internal "German" threat. The third section deals with the Mennonite attempts to secure exemption from laws such as the land liquidation laws on the basis of their Dutch ethnicity.

These two parts of the study are set between an introductory set of chapters that deal with the Mennonites' growing awareness of the importance of history and their recovery of an "Anabaptist Vision," and a concluding section on their search for identity in the aftermath of their struggle with the government.

During the years of conflict, Mennonites drafted many documents addressing the basic question: "Who are the Mennonites?" The epilogue probes the development of a Russian Mennonite identity in relation to their previous history.

Abraham Friesen is Professor of Renaissance & Reformation History, Emeritus, at the University of California at Santa Barbara. He is the author of the following major studies: *Reformation and Utopia: The Marxist Interpretation of the Reformation and its Antecedents* (1974); *Thomas Müntzer, A Destroyer of the Godless* (1990); *History and Renewal in the Anabaptist/Mennonite Tradition* (1994); and *Erasmus, the Anabaptists and the Great Commission* (1998). He and his wife Gerry now live in Fresno, California.



ISBN 1-894791-07-X



9 781894 791076 >